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M. R. MASANI  
*Mayor of Bombay*

1941

# SATI KASTURBA

## A LIFE-SKETCH

WITH TRIBUTES  
*IN MEMORIAM*

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## FOREWORD

RARELY have the common people throughout India been so moved and so grieved by the passing away from amongst their midst of any compatriot, however great, as they have been by the death of Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi. Kasturba's outstanding qualities were not of greatness but of goodness. The world is full of clever, intelligent, brilliant men, each great in his own way, but it lacks its fair share of the goodness that should accompany these qualities. Hence our plight. The nationwide tribute that has been paid to Kasturba in the past few days has significance in that it represents in a way the triumph of goodness over mere greatness.

While this may be an encouraging and heartening thought, it is not unaccompanied by the national humiliation of our having allowed this grand old woman at the age of seventy-five to die in captivity. It is a painful reminder to us that our national destiny still remains unfulfilled.

A National Memorial Fund has been established to perpetuate Kasturba's memory. The editor and the publishers of this book have decided that their royalties and profits will go towards the Fund. I would like to congratulate them on that decision as well as on the promptness with which they have made available this little record of Kasturba's life and work. Every reader is thus enabled, in one act, to learn more about Kasturba as well as to contribute his or her mite towards perpetuating her memory.

M. R. MASANI  
*Mayor of Bombay*

*11th March, 1944*

## INTRODUCTION

ACROSS the pages of history the names of six women stand out in the reflected glory of their saintly husbands—Maitreyee, wife of the Upanishadic sage Yajnavalkya; Yashodhara, wife of Gautama the Buddha; Xanthippe, wife of Socrates; Jijai, wife of the Maratha poet-saint Tukaram; Sophia, wife of Tolstoy; and Sharadadevi, wife of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. To these must now be added the name of Kasturba, wife, just departed, of Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest living Indian and the noblest among mankind.

When in the evening of his life, Yajnavalkya, the greatest philosopher of his age, intent on retiring to the forest, sought to divide his earthly belongings between his two wives, Maitreyee, the younger among them, who too was an earnest seeker after Truth, put him this question: 'My Lord, if indeed these riches become mine, shall I attain immortality through them?' Yajnavalkya's reply was: 'No, my dear; your life will be like that of people who have plenty of things, but you can have no hope of immortality through riches.' 'Then, Sir,' said Maitreyee, 'what shall I do with that which will not make me immortal? I do not seek riches, but That alone which will lead me to immortality.' And Yajnavalkya had tarried a while, to impart to his beloved wife the secret of immortality.

Yashodhara had grieved beyond words at the sudden renunciation of herself, her newly-born

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child, and the home, by her Lord, Gautama the Sîkya prince, but when after years of struggle for supreme enlightenment, he returned to the city of his forefathers as the Buddha, with the beggar's bowl in hand, she was among the first of her sex to seek discipleship at his hallowed feet, and eventually became the Head of the Women's Order in the 'Sangha'

Xanthippe has become, in legend at least if not history, the type for all time, of the shrew and the virago. 'It is but natural that showers should follow thunder,' Socrates is reported to have remarked calmly with a smile, when this irate spouse of his had shouted at him and then poured a bucketful of water over his head as punishment for his eternal discourses with friends and disciples.

Poor Jijai, wife of Tukaram, had to face untold privations throughout her wedded life because of the idiosyncrasies of her unworldly spouse.

Countess Sophia Tolstoy was entirely out of sympathy with her philosophically minded husband - their temperaments were irreconcilable. Indeed, Tolstoy could find personal relief only by abandoning home and wife in his old age.

Not so, however, was the case with Sharadadevi, the consort of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, the sage of Dakshineshwar. Their 'marriage' never assumed a physical significance, because Shri Ramakrishna, even before he was led to the altar, had risen above attachment to the body, and concerned himself with spiritual things only. This had been quickly grasped and accepted by Sharadadevi.

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even though she was but a girl-wife, and so, when her God-intoxicated husband asked her whether she was willing to free him from his obligations to her as her duly wedded husband, she had replied without a moment's hesitation that she would not stand in the way of his spiritual quest and that she would consider herself thrice blessed if he would allow her to walk in his footsteps and to minister to his needs as a devoted servant.

Shrimati Kasturba was neither shrewish like Xanthippe nor docile like Yashodhara. She was neither an intellectual like Maitreyee nor a worldly woman like Countess Tolstoy. She was, if one may say so, somewhat like an amalgam of the personalities of Jijai and Sharadadevi. Both these loved their husbands intensely, but while the former found it beyond her to put up with the endless idiosyncrasies of her saintly spouse and was perpetually grumbling about her unfortunate lot, the latter, with only one glance at her lord as it were, was able to take the full measure of his Himalayan personality and with a resignation that bespoke the nobility of her own soul, resolved to aid him. She had an immense understanding for things religious, and trained by that incomparable Master, the Paramahamsa, she became verily the 'Holy Mother' to his disciples.

Kasturba too, like the spouse of Tukaram, possessed a strong will of her own, a great deal of practical good sense, and a flair for domestic management, as her career reveals. Not unoften in the earlier years of her wedded life, she like Jijai felt

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extremely miserable and resented, even vocally, the 'idiosyncrasies' of her lord and master. She even succeeded, at times, in correcting the latter and making him give up his obstinate ways. Indeed, Gandhiji himself first learnt the secret of Satyagraha at her hands. But, unlike Jijii and truly like Sharadadevi, Kasturba was gifted with an understanding which helped her to appreciate to the full the nobility of her husband's personality and the magnitude of his sacrifices.

We have said that Kasturba's personality was an amalgam of Jijai and Sharadadevi. More appropriately, perhaps, it might be said that in her were combined a number of the noble characteristics of *Satis* or model wives known to Hindu epics and legend, such as Sita, Savitri, Damayanti, Draupadi, Arundhati and Anasuya, their sufferings and ordeals find a close parallel in Kasturba's career. Few women of history or epic were called upon, as Kasturba was, to undergo a series of ordeals, one after another and for over three score years. Savitri was called upon once only to rescue her husband from the hands of death. Kasturba had to face this ordeal more than half a dozen times. Her silent and selfless devotion to her husband and her complete identification with his aims and ideals, recall to mind the fidelity of Sita, Draupadi, Damayanti, Arundhati and Anasuya of old. She was a true *Sati*—embodiment of all that is noblest in Indian womanhood.

But Gandhiji's own tribute to Kasturba is perhaps the best summing up of her personality, and

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it is inimitable—‘She is blessed with one great quality to a very considerable degree, a quality which most Hindu wives possess in some measure. And it is this: willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, she considers herself blessed following in my footsteps. Though there is a wide difference between us intellectually. I have always had the feeling that ours is a life of contentment, happiness and progress.’

Their relation to each other had reached the exalted plane of pure religion. ‘I can no more describe my feeling for Hinduism than for my own wife,’ says Gandhiji. ‘She moves me as no other woman in the world can. Not that she has no faults: I daresay she has many more than I see myself. But the feeling of an indissoluble bond is there.’

Though it must for ever remain a matter of indelible shame, to the powers that be no less than to her countrymen, that so noble a soul had to depart this life from the walls of a prison, one feels thankful to the Almighty, as the venerable Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya has observed, that Kasturba departed a ‘Sowbhagyavati’ in the sight of her lord and that too on the auspicious night of Shivaratri. She has left an imperishable name in the annals of India’s struggle for freedom which will continue to inspire her countrymen and countrywomen for countless generations!

## 1. BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD •

BOTH Kasturba and Gandhiji were born at Porbunder in 1869. The exact date of Kasturba's birth is a matter of uncertainty. According to her only brother, Sjt. Madhaydas Gokuldas, she was three or four months younger than Gandhiji, but according to the records preserved by members of the family of Laxmidas Gandhi, the Mahatma's eldest brother, Kasturba was born in April 1869, about six months before Gandhiji.

Kasturba's father, a merchant named Gokuldas Makanji, and Gandhiji's father, Karamchand or 'Kaba' Gandhi who was Dewan of Porbunder, had been great friends for years and the idea of tying their two children in wedlock had occurred to them very early. The betrothal of Mohandas and Kasturba took place in their seventh year. The actual wedding, however, was celebrated in 1882. Referring to the latter event Gandhiji has observed as follows in his Autobiography:

'I do not think it meant to me anything more than the prospect of good clothes to wear, drum-beating, marriage processions, rich dinners, and a strange girl to play with... Little did I dream then that one day I should severely criticize my father for having married me as a child. Everything on that day seemed to me right and proper and pleasing. There was also my own eagerness to get married.'

## 2 THE GIRL-WIFE

Coming from an orthodox family of those times Kasturba had never attended any school! At the time of marriage, therefore, she was wholly illiterate 'I was very anxious to teach her' writes Gandhiji in his Autobiography, 'but lustful love left me no time. For one thing the teaching had to be done against her will, and that too at night. I dared not meet her in the presence of the elders, much less talk to her. Kathiawad had then, and to a certain extent has even today, its own peculiar, useless and barbarous Purdah. Circumstances were thus unfavourable. I must, therefore, confess that most of my efforts to instruct Kasturba in our youth were unsuccessful. And when I was awokened I had already launched forth into public life which did not leave me much spare time. I failed likewise to instruct her through private tutors. As a result Kasturba can now with difficulty write simple letters and understand simple Gujarathi. I am sure, that had my love for her been absolutely untainted with lust, she would have been a learned lady today, for I could then have conquered her dislike for studies. I know that nothing is impossible for pure love.'

Dealing with the first few years of their wedded life, Gandhiji writes

' ' If I should be pledged to be faithful to my wife, she also should be pledged to be faithful to me,' " I said to myself. The thought made me a jealous husband. Her duty was easily converted into my right to exact faithfulness from her, and if it had to

be exacted, I should be watchfully tenacious of the right. I had absolutely no reason to suspect my wife's fidelity, but jealousy does not wait for reasons. I must needs be for ever on the look-out regarding her movements, and therefore she could not go anywhere without my permission. This sowed the seeds of a bitter quarrel between us. The restraint was virtually a sort of imprisonment. And Kasturba was not the girl to brook any such thing. She made it a point to go out whenever and wherever she liked. More restraint on my part resulted in more liberty being taken by her, and in my getting more and more cross. Refusal to speak to one another thus became the order of the day with us, married children. I think it was quite innocent of Kasturba to have taken those liberties with my restraint on going to the temple or on going on visits to friends. If I had the right to impose restrictions on her, had not she also a similar right? All this is clear to me today. But at that time I had to make good my authority as a husband!

'Let not the reader think, however, that ours was a life of unrelieved bitterness. For my severities were all based on love. I wanted to *make* my wife an ideal wife. My ambition was to *make* her live a pure life, learn what I learnt, and identify her life and thought with mine. I do not know whether Kasturba had any such ambition. She was illiterate. By nature she was simple, independent, persevering and, with me at least, reticent. She was not impatient of her ignorance and I do not recollect my studies having ever spurred her to go in for a

similar adventure I fancy, therefore, that my ambition was all one sided My passion was entirely centred on one woman, and I wanted it to be reciprocated But even if there were no reciprocity, it could not be all unrelieved misery because there was active love on one side at least I must say I was passionately fond of her'

Continuing, Gandhiji observes 'Hindu society has another custom which to a certain extent diminishes the evils of child marriage Parents do not allow young couples to stay together for long The child wife spends more than half her time at her father's place Such was the case with us That is to say, during the first five years of our married life (from the age of 13 to 18), we could not have lived together longer than an aggregate period of three years We would hardly spend six months together, when there would be a call to my wife from her parents Such calls were very unwelcome in those days, but they saved us both At the age of eighteen I went to England and this meant a long and healthy spell of separation Even after my return from England, we hardly stayed together longer than six months'

Their first baby was born in 1888 Soon after in the same year Gandhiji who had matriculated in 1887, sailed for England to study for the Bar During his absence, Kasturba stayed with her child at her father in law's place at Rajkot, where the latter had now made his permanent residence

After being called to the Bar in England in 1891 Gandhiji returned to India the same year.

First at Rajkot and then at Bombay he tried practising as a lawyer for about a year but with little success. He set up a modest household at the latter place, with Kasturba as the presiding goddess. Regarding his domestic life about this time Gandhiji writes:

'My relations with my wife were still not as I desired. Even my stay in England had not cured me of jealousy. I continued my squeamishness and suspiciousness in respect of every little thing, and hence all my cherished desires remained unfulfilled. I had decided that my wife should learn reading and writing and that I should help her in her studies, but my lust came in the way and she had to suffer for my own shortcoming. Once I went to the length of sending her away to her father's house, and consented to receive her back only after I had made her thoroughly miserable. I saw later that all this was pure folly on my part.'

### 3. CALL FROM SOUTH AFRICA

In 1893, shortly after he had left Bombay in disgust to try his luck once again at Rajkot, an invitation came to him in 1893 from a Muslim merchant prince to proceed to South Africa to fight out a legal case there. He did not take with him his wife and child to South Africa on this occasion, but he did so three years later, when he had come back to India and was summoned once again to that colony. By this time he had already plunged himself into the struggle for the emancipation of his countrymen in South Africa from the political

serfdom in which they were held down by the Whites Hardly had he, with Kasturba and the children—'children', because one more child had been born by this time—set foot on South African soil at Durban than he was mobbed almost to death by the Whites of that town who had become enraged at the agitation he had started in India on behalf of his countrymen residing in South Africa. This was only the first of a long series of terrifying ordeals which poor Kasturba had to pass through in quick succession because an inscrutable Providence had linked her destinies with those of one whose entire career henceforth was to be an epic of deathless heroism amidst untold sufferings.

The next nine years, which were spent by Kasturba mostly with her husband in South Africa, may be said to constitute for her the most formative period of her life, and also years of comparative peace and happiness. For, it was during this period that Gandhiji got himself enrolled as an attorney of the Supreme Court of Transvaal (1903) founded the Transvaal British Indian Association the weekly journal '*Indian Opinion*', and the famous Phoenix Settlement (1904) the Utopia of his dreams. The famous 'Experiments with Truth' had started, and Kasturba was the helpmate, often the victim, of this most original experimenter who spared others less than his own, and himself the least.

*Soon after his arrival in South Africa with his wife and children Gandhiji resolved on 'modernizing' the family to suit the new surroundings. He*

writes: 'I..... determined the style of dress for my wife and children. How could I like them to be known as Kathiawad Banias? The Parsis used then to be regarded as the most civilized people among Indians, and so, when the complete European style seemed to be unsuited, we adopted the Parsi style. Accordingly, my wife wore the Parsi *sari* and the boys the Parsi coat and trousers. Of course, no one could be without shoes and stockings. It was long before my wife and children could get used to them. The shoes cramped their feet and the stockings stank with perspiration. The toes often got sore. I always had my answers ready for all these occasions. But I have an impression that it was not so much the answers as the force of authority that carried conviction. They agreed to the changes in dress as there was no alternative. In the same spirit and with even more reluctance they adopted the use of knives and forks. When my infatuation for these signs of civilization wore away, they gave up the knives and forks.'

#### 4. DOMESTIC SATYAGRAHA

When he was practising in Durban his office clerks often stayed with him and there were among them Christians as well as Hindus. 'I do not recollect,' says Gandhiji, 'having ever regarded them as anything but kith and kin. I treated them as members of my family, and had unpleasantness with my wife if ever she stood in the way of my treating them as such. One of the clerks was a Christian, born of Panchama parents.'

Continuing, Gandhiji says 'The house was built after the Western model and the rooms rightly had no outlets for dirty water. Each room had, therefore, chamber-pots. Rather than have these cleaned by a servant or a sweeper, my wife or I attended to them. The clerks who made themselves completely at home would naturally clean their own pots, but the Christian clerk was a newcomer, and it was our duty to attend to his bedroom. My wife managed the pots of the others, but to clean those used by one who had been a Panchama seemed to her to be the limit, and we fell out. She could not bear the pots being cleaned by me, neither did she like doing it herself. Even today I can recall the picture of her chiding me, her eyes red with anger, and pearl drops streaming down her cheeks, as she descended the ladder, pot in hand. But I was a cruelly kind husband. I regarded myself as her teacher, and so harassed her out of my blind love for her.'

'I was far from being satisfied by her merely carrying the pot, I would have her do it cheerfully. So I said, raising my voice 'I will not stand this nonsense in my house.' The words pierced her like an arrow. She shouted back "Keep your house to yourself and let me go." I forgot myself, and the spirit of compassion dried up in me. I caught her by hand, dragged the helpless woman to the gate, which was just opposite the ladder and proceeded to open it with the intention of pushing her out. Tears were running down her cheeks in torrents, and she cried 'Have you no sense of shame? Must

you so far forget yourself? Where am I to go? I have no parents or relatives here to harbour me. Being your wife, you think I must put up with your cuffs and kicks? For Heaven's sake behave yourself, and shut the gate. Let us not be found making scenes like this."

"I put on a brave face, but was really ashamed and shut the gate. If my wife could not leave me, neither could I leave her. We have had numerous bickerings but the end has always been peace between us. The wife, with her matchless power of endurance, has always been the victor.

"Today I am in a position to narrate the incident with some detachment, as it belongs to a period out of which I have fortunately emerged. I am no longer a blind, infatuated husband; I am no more my wife's teacher. Kasturba can, if she will, be unpleasant to me today, as I used to be to her before. We are tried friends, the one no longer regarding the other as the object of lust. She has been a faithful nurse throughout my illnesses, serving without any thought of reward.

"The incident in question occurred in 1898, when I had no conception of *Brahmacharya*. It was a time when I thought that the wife was the object of her husband's lust, born to do her husband's behest, rather than a helpmate, a comrade and a partner in the husband's joys and sorrows. It was in the year 1900 that these ideas underwent a radical transformation and in 1906 they took concrete shape. .... Suffice it to say that with the gradual disappearance in me of the carnal appetite, my domestic

life became and is becoming more and more peaceful sweet and happy'

He relates another incident in his domestic life in South Africa

'In Natal, before retiring to India, I was given some gifts I knew that I should have some difficulty in persuading my wife, and I was sure that I should have none so far as the children were concerned "You may not need them," said my wife. "Your children may not need them Cajoled, they will dance to your tune I can understand your not permitting me to wear them But what about my daughters-in-law? They will be sure to need them And who knows what will happen tomorrow? I would be the last person to part with gifts so lovingly given" And thus the torrent of argument went on, reinforced in the end by tears But the children were adamant And I was unmoved

'I mildly put in. "The children have yet to get married We do not want to see them married young When they are grown up, they can take care of themselves And surely we shall not have, for our sons brides who are fond of ornaments And if after all, we need to provide them with ornaments I am there You will ask me then"

"Ask you? I know you by this time You deprived me of my ornaments, you would not leave me in peace with them Fancy you offering to get ornaments for the daughters in law! You who are trying to make 'sadhus' of my boys from today! No, the ornaments will not be returned And pray, what right have you to my necklace?"

"But," I rejoined, "is the necklace given you for your service or for my service?"

"I agree. But service rendered by you is as good as rendered by me. I have toiled and moiled for you day and night. Is that no service? You forced all and sundry on me, making me weep bitter tears, and I slaved for them."

"These were pointed thrusts, and some of them went home. But I was determined to return the ornaments. I somehow succeeded in extorting a consent from her. The gifts received in 1896 and 1901 were all returned. A trust-deed was prepared, and they were deposited with a bank to be used for the service of the community, according to my wishes or those of the trustees."

## 5. KASTURBA'S COURAGE

Kasturba had several times in her life narrowly escaped death through serious illness and three such incidents which occurred in South Africa are referred to by Gandhiji in his Autobiography. He writes:

"Thrice in her life my wife narrowly escaped death through serious illness. The cures were due to household remedies. At the time of her first attack Satyagraha (in South Africa) was going on or was about to commence. She had frequent haemorrhage. A medical friend advised a surgical operation, to which she agreed after some hesitation. She was extremely emaciated, and the doctor had to perform the operation without chloroform. It was successful, but she had to suffer much pain. She, however, went through it with wonderful bravery.

The doctor and his wife who nursed her were all attention This was in Durban The doctor gave me leave to go to Johannesburg, and told me not to have any anxiety about the patient

'In a few days, however, I received a letter to the effect that Kasturba was worse, too weak to sit up in bed, and had once become unconscious The doctor knew that he might not, without my consent, give her wines or meat So he telephoned to me at Johannesburg for permission to give her beef tea I replied saying I could not grant the permission, but that if she was in a condition to express her wish in the matter, she might be consulted, and she was free to do as she liked "But," said the doctor, "I refused to consult the patient's wishes in the matter You must come yourself If you do not leave me free to prescribe whatever diet I like, I will not hold myself responsible for your wife's life"

I took the train for Durban the same day, and met the doctor who quietly broke this news to me. "I had already given Mrs Gandhi beef tea when I telephoned to you"

"Now, doctor, I call this a fraud" I said

"No question of fraud in prescribing medicine or diet for a patient In fact we doctors consider it a virtue to deceive patients or their relatives, if thereby we can save our patients" said the doctor with determination

I was deeply pained, but kept cool The doctor was a good man and a personal friend He and his wife had laid me under a debt of gratitude, but I was not prepared to put up with his medical morals

"Doctor, tell me what you propose to do now. I would never allow my wife to be given meat or beef, even if the denial meant her death, unless of course she desired to take it."

"You are welcome to your philosophy. I tell you that, so long as you keep your wife under my treatment, I must have the option to give her anything I wish. If you don't like this I must regretfully ask you to remove her. I can't see her die under my roof."

"Do you mean to say that I must remove her at once?"

"Whenever did I ask you to remove her? I only want to be left entirely free. If you do so, my wife and I will do all that is possible for her, and you may go back without the least anxiety on her score. But if you will not understand this simple thing, you will compel me to ask you to remove your wife from my place."

I think one of my sons was with me. He entirely agreed with me, and said his mother should not be given beef tea. I next spoke to Kasturba herself. She was really too weak to be consulted in this matter. But I thought it my painful duty to do so. I told her what had passed between the doctor and myself. She gave a resolute reply: "I will not take beef tea. It is a rare thing in this world to be born as a human being, and I would far rather die in your arms than pollute my body with such abominations."

I pleaded with her. I told her that she was not bound to follow me. I cited to her the instances

of Hindu friends and acquaintances who had no scruples about taking meat or wine as medicine. But she was adamant "No," said she, "pray remove me at once"

"I was delighted. Not without some agitation I decided to take her away. I informed the doctor of her resolve. He exclaimed in a rage. "What a callous man you are!"

"It was drizzling and the station was some distance. We had to take the train to Durban for Phoenix, whence our Settlement was reached by a road of two miles and a half. I was undoubtedly taking a very great risk, but I trusted in God and proceeded with my task.

"Kasturba needed no cheering up. On the contrary, she comforted me, saying "Nothing will happen to me. Don't worry."

"She was mere skin and bones, having had no nourishment for days. The station platform was very large, and as the rickshaw could not be taken inside, one had to walk some distance before one could reach the train. So I carried her in my arms and put her into the compartment. From Phoenix we carried her in the hammock, and there she slowly picked up strength under hydropathic treatment.

"In two or three days of our arrival at Phoenix a Swami came to our place. He had heard of the resolute way in which we had rejected the doctor's advice, and he had out of sympathy, come to plead with us. He held forth on the religious harmlessness of meat, citing authorities from Manu. I knew that some of these verses from *Manusmriti* were

interpolations. But Kasturba's faith was unshakable. To her scriptural texts were a sealed book but the traditional religion of her forefathers was enough for her. "Swamiji," she said, "whatever you may say I do not want to recover by means of beef tea. Pray don't worry me any more. You may discuss the thing with my husband and children if you like. But my mind is made up."

Gandhiji recounts another incident during a later illness:

"It happened that Kasturba, who had a brief respite after her operation, had again begun getting haemorrhage, and the malady seemed to be obstinate. So when all remedies failed, I entreated her to give up salt and pulses. But she would not agree. She challenged me, saying that even I could not give up these articles if I was advised to do so. I was pained and equally delighted—delighted in that I got an opportunity to shower my love on her: "You are mistaken. If I was ailing and the doctor advised me to give up these or other articles, I should unhesitatingly do so. But there! Without any medical advice I give up salt and pulses for one year, whether you do so or not."

"She was rudely shocked and exclaimed in deep sorrow: "Pray forgive me. Knowing you, I should not have provoked you. I promise to abstain from these things, but for Heaven's sake take back your vow. This is too hard on me."

"It is very good for you to forgo these articles. I have not the slightest doubt that you will be all the better without them. As for me, I cannot retract a

vow seriously taken. And it is sure to benefit me, for all restraint, whatever prompts it, is wholesome for man. You will, therefore, leave me alone. It will be a test for me, and moral support for you in carrying out your resolve." So she gave me up. "You are too obstinate. You will listen to none," she said, and sought relief in tears.

Gandhiji counts this incident as an instance of Satyagraha, and 'one of the sweetest recollections' of his life. After she had given up the use of salt and pulses, says Gandhi, 'she rallied quickly, haemorrhage completely stopped, and I added somewhat to my reputation as a quack.'

## 6 A DIVINE CALL

But already a new and higher call was being sounded in Gandhi's ears, which he felt compelled to listen to and ultimately to follow regardless of all consequences, and that was the final total consecration of his life to the achievement of the emancipation, first of his own down trodden countrymen from the thraldom of the Whites and then, through his countrymen, of all the weak and oppressed peoples of the earth from the tyranny of stronger and imperialistic nations. In 1906, he appears to have realized that he could not devote his attention and energies to the public causes which he had at heart unless and until he gave up completely the satisfaction of all his carnal appetites. Explaining why he took the vow of *Brahmacharya* in 1906, Gandhi writes in his Autobiography 'I clearly saw that one aspiring to serve humanity with his whole soul

could not do without it. It was borne in upon me that I should have more occasions for service of the kind I was rendering, and that I should find myself unequal to my task if I were engaged in the pleasures of family life and in the propagation and rearing of children. In a word, I could not live both after the flesh and the spirit.' Thus it was that *Brahmacharya*, which he says he had been observing willy-nilly since 1900, was sealed with a vow in the middle of 1906.

Gandhiji says that he had not shared his thoughts on the subject with Kasturba until then, but only consulted her at the time of taking the vow. 'She had no objection. But I was hard put to it in making the final resolve. I had not the necessary strength ....But I launched forth with faith in the sustaining power of God,' writes Gandhiji in his Autobiography. Some three decades after he took this vow of *Brahmacharya*, Gandhiji, writing in his *Harijan*, made the following observations on the significance as well as consequences of this unique event in the lives of both himself and Kasturba :

'From that day when I began *Brahmacharya*, our freedom began. My wife became a free woman, free from my authority as her lord and master, and I became free from the slavery to my own appetite which she had to satisfy. No other woman had any attraction for me in the same sense that my wife had. I was too loyal to her as husband, and too loyal to the vow I had taken before my mother, to be slave to any other woman. But the manner in which my *Brahmacharya* came to me irresistibly

drew me to woman as the mother of man She became too sacred for sexual love And so every woman at once became sister or daughter to me'

Hardly a couple of months had passed since this stern vow was taken by him, when he was called upon to inaugurate the Satyagraha movement in South Africa which was destined to tax his energies to the utmost and take him, and Kasturba as well, through unparalleled ordeals for a number of years to come

It would appear, however, that during the early days of the campaign Gandhiji, misreading Kasturba's attitude towards the movement, had made no attempts to interest her in it So it happened that when once Gandhiji was discussing with the women inmates of the Phoenix Settlement regarding their participation in the Satyagraha Kasturba came out and told her husband 'I am sorry that you are not telling me about this What defect is there in me which disqualifies me for jail? I also wish to take the path to which you are inviting the others' Gandhiji replied 'You know I am the last person to cause you pain There is no question of my distrust in you I would be only too glad if you went to jail, but it should not appear at all as if you went at my instance In matters like this every one should act relying solely upon one's own strength and courage If I asked you, you might be inclined to go just for the sake of complying with my request And then if you began to tremble in the law court or were terrified by hardships in jail, I could not find fault with you, but how would it stand with me?

How could I then harbour you or look the world in the face? It is fears like these which have prevented me from asking you too to court jail.' 'You may have nothing to do with me,' she said, 'if being unable to stand jail I secure my release by an apology. If you can endure hardships and so can my boys, why cannot I? I am bound to join the struggle.'

After this, Kasturba joyfully took her rightful place by the side of her husband in the front rank of the Satyagrahis.

The epic story of the Satyagraha struggle in South Africa is well known. During this campaign of six years Kasturba, courting arrests and imprisonments repeatedly along with Gandhiji, showed her mettle as a tireless worker and dauntless heroine—worthy spouse of her valiant husband. At the very threshold of the struggle, she had seen her husband nearly killed by Pathans, who mistakenly thought that he had betrayed the cause of his countrymen. In the thick of the struggle she had seen him convicted and forced to break stones like a common felon. She had seen him passing through the fiery ordeal of a fast for fourteen days for the failings of some of the members of the Phoenix Settlement. She had seen him also emerge triumphant at last from the South African struggle, and win the gratitude of his countrymen both in South Africa and in India.

## 7. RETURN TO INDIA

Gandhiji returned to India with Kasturba and the children in January 1915. The following May

saw the foundation of the Satyagraha Ashram at Ahmedabad which was to become the future home of Gandhiji and his family and the laboratory for his and his co-workers' 'experiments with truth'. Kasturba of course was one of the very first to enlist herself as a member of the Ashram. The first band of workers, including Gandhiji, consisted of not more than twenty-five men and women. All had their meals in a common kitchen and strove to live as one family. It need hardly be stated that all the younger members of the Ashram looked up to 'Ba' as their mother and as the presiding deity of the household. Shrimati Sarojini Naidu has given the following picture of Kasturba as she appeared to her in February of that year:

'She sat by her husband's side, simple and serene and dignified in the hour of triumph, as she had proved herself simple, serene and dauntless in the hour of trial and tragedy. I have a vision too of her brave, frail, pain worn hand which must have held aloft the lamp of her country's honour undimmed in one alien land, working at rough garments for wounded soldiers in another. The great South African leader who, to quote Mr Gokhale's apt phrase, had moulded heroes out of clay, was reclining, a little ill and weary, on the floor, eating his frugal meal of nuts and fruit (which I shared) and his wife was busy and content as though she were a mere modest housewife absorbed in a hundred details of household service, and not the world-famed heroine of a hundred noble sufferings in a nation's cause.'

Life at the Ashram, however, was not all smooth-sailing, even from the very first. When the constitution of the Ashram was being drafted, the question of admissibility of 'untouchables' had cropped up and Gandhiji made it clear to his co-workers that he would take the first opportunity of admitting an 'untouchable' candidate to the Ashram if he was otherwise worthy. Hardly a few months had passed after the foundation of the Ashram when a real test came with startling suddenness. A family of 'untouchables' actually came forward and sought admission to the Ashram, declaring their readiness to abide by its rules. After consulting some of his co-workers Gandhiji told the family that they were accepted as members. Their admission, however, created quite a flutter not only among the friends who had been helping the Ashram with funds, but also among some of the inmates of the Ashram. Besides stoppage of all monetary help, there was also talk of social boycott of the Ashram by friends outside. Gandhiji was able to tide over the financial crisis within a short time, but the storm inside the Ashram appears to have taxed his energies and patience even more than the storm outside. It is stated that Kasturba and other ladies of the Ashram could not be persuaded for some time to consider it desirable to admit 'untouchables' as co-members. They feared that the Ashram would come to grief as it would be subjected to social boycott. The story goes that Gandhiji became so sad at the turn of events and especially at his own inability to convert Kasturba to his view, that he denied himself all

food for nearly seven days. None of the members of the Ashram, save Kasturba, had an inkling of the cause of Gandhiji's fast. During those seven days Kasturba slowly awakened to the fact that behind that promise, in itself irrevokable, to the 'untouchable' family was a whole philosophy of conduct for which the Ashram stood, that she could not keep the Ashram and let its principles go, and that, anyway, the Ashram was nothing without its soul, the Mahatma. On the seventh day —such her tenacity to hold anything—Gandhiji gave her, a household, an Ashram, a principle of conduct —on the seventh day she withdrew her opposition. After this episode, all her distaste for association with Harijans entirely disappeared and she became one of the most active co-workers of her husband in his efforts to eradicate the stigma of 'untouchability' from Hindu society.

Kasturba had an ingrained love for the poor and the helpless, and when Gandhiji embarked in 1917 on his mission of emancipating the villagers of Champaran from the thraldom of its White indigo planters, he enlisted the services of Kasturba and a few other lady workers to carry the light of knowledge to the cottages of these poor people. She was chosen as one of the teachers for the six village schools he founded, although she hardly knew how to read and write even Gujarathi. Teaching of cleanliness, good manners, orderliness, discipline, and so on was the task assigned to her. She was asked to go into the huts of the villagers and find out why the women-folk did not wash their clothes, and to teach

them how to wash. Kasturba reported to Gandhiji what she was told on her rounds—that women did not wash because they had only one *sari* each ! ‘Tell Mahatmaji to get me another *sa i.*’ said one, ‘and I shall then promise to bathe and put on clean clothes every day.’ Such was the depth of poverty in which these villagers lived ! It was in such a hard school of experience that Kasturba learnt the secrets of genuine service to the illiterate and poverty-stricken masses of her country.

## 8. ARRESTS AND IMPRISONMENTS

She took an active part in the Non-co-operation Movement launched by her husband in 1921, as also in the Civil Disobedience movements of 1930 and 1932 and suffered imprisonments several times.

In March 1922 when Gandhiji was arrested and, after a memorable trial, was sentenced to six years’ imprisonment, Kasturba courageously stepped into the breach and issued the following stirring message to the nation:

‘My dear Countrymen and Countrywomen—

‘My dear husband has been sentenced today to six years’ simple imprisonment. While I cannot deny that this heavy sentence has to some extent told upon me, I have consoled myself with the thought that it is not beyond our powers to reduce that sentence and release him by our own exertions long before this term of imprisonment is over.

‘I have no doubt that, if India wakes up and seriously undertakes to carry out the constructive programme of the Congress, we shall succeed not only

in releasing him, but also in solving to our satisfaction all the three issues for which we have been fighting and suffering, for the last eighteen months or more.

"The remedy, therefore, lies with us. If we fail, the fault will be ours. I therefore appeal to all men and women who feel for me and have regard for my husband, to wholeheartedly concentrate on the constructive programme and make it a success."

"Among all the items of the programme he laid the greatest emphasis on the spinning wheel and khaddar. Our success in these will not only solve the economic problem of India in relation to the masses, but also free us from our political bondage. India's first answer, then, to Mr Gandhi's conviction should be that

(a) All men and women give up foreign cloth and adopt khaddar and persuade others to do so;

(b) All women make it a religious duty to spin and produce yarn every day and persuade others to do so;

(c) All merchants cease trading in foreign piecegoods."

When Gandhiji, in the supreme interests of Hindu-Muslim unity, went through the fiery ordeal of 21 days' fast at Delhi in September 1924, Kasturba faced the agony with a resignation that was extremely touching. It must have been her silent prayers to the All Merciful like those of Sati Savitri of old, that pulled out her beloved lord from the jaws of death into which he had entered. She was destined to pass through several more similar ordeals on

account of her husband before she herself attained her martyrdom.

On Jan. 15, 1932 Kasturba was sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment under the Criminal Law Amendment Act. On her release, she was re-arrested on March 15 and sentenced by the Magistrate of Bardoli to undergo six months' rigorous imprisonment. In this manner, she courted imprisonment at every time of national crisis.

When in April 1935 Gandhiji, who had disbanded the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati two years earlier, decided to make his headquarters at Sevagram near Wardha, Kasturba took charge of the 'family' of workers with the same enthusiasm as she had done at Sabarmati. Of her life and influence at Sevagram, Mrs Ela Sen has written:

'Little is ever heard of her, little is ever written of her; but the life at Sevagram has flown round Kasturba Gandhi, dominated by the spirit of her sacrifices and her untold patience and understanding. She is a great lady, in whom is vested all that India prizes most. Her gifts to the nation have been no less than her husband's, inasmuch as she has been the silent participator of all that has originated from him.'

Col. Liddel Hart too, in his *Gandhi and the Indian Problem* has observed of her as follows:

'We shall never see a more interesting or unique sight whilst we are in India than this charming little lady and first-class housekeeper as she sits in her snow-white garments catering to the needs of the inmates.'

During the Rajkot agitation of 1939, she plunged into the struggle in spite of her weak health and was imprisoned by the State authorities along with several other ladies without any trial whatsoever. Regarding this precipitate step of hers, Gandhiji wrote in the '*Harijan*'

'I had not intended to say anything about my wife having joined in the Rajkot struggle. But some cruel criticism I have seen about her intervention prompts an explanation. It had never occurred to me that she should join it. For one thing she is too old for such hardships as are involved in being in civil disobedience struggles. But strange as it may appear to critics, they must believe me when I say that though she is illiterate, she is and has been for years absolutely free to do what she likes. When she joined the struggle in South Africa or in India, it was of her own inner prompting. And so it was this time. When she heard of Maniben's arrest, she could not restrain herself and asked me to let her go. I said she was too weak. She had just then fainted in her bathroom in Delhi, and might have died but for Devadas's presence of mind. She said she did not mind. I then referred to Sardar. He would not hear of it either.'

'But this time he melted. He had seen my grief over the breach of faith by the Thakore Saheb induced by the Resident. Kasturba is a daughter of Rajkot. She felt a personal call. She could not sit still whilst the other daughters of Rajkot were suffering for the freedom of the men and women of the State. The success of the struggle

in Rajkot will be a stage forward in the fight for freedom. And when it ends in success, as it must, sooner or later, I hope Kasturba's share will count as a humble contribution towards it. Satyagraha is a struggle in which the oldest and the weakest in body may take part, if they have stout hearts.'

It may be stated in this connexion that when Gandhiji started his 'fast unto death' at Rajkot Kasturba was still in jail. When the news of the fast was conveyed to her in her prison, she was disconsolate and addressed a pathetic note to Gandhiji mildly reproaching him for not even consulting her before he launched on his fast. To this Gandhiji replied:

'You are worrying for nothing. You ought to rejoice that God has sent me an opportunity to do His will. How could I consult you or anybody else before undertaking the fast when I myself was not aware that it was coming? God gave the signal, and what else could I do than obey? Will there be any stopping to consult you or anybody when the final peremptory summons comes as some day it must come?'

When a message was conveyed to Kasturba from Gandhiji asking whether she wanted him to entreat the State authorities to allow her to be with him during the fast, her reply was characteristic: 'No, by no means. I shall be quite content if they let me have daily news of him. God who has taken care of him during all his previous trials will pull him safely through this too. But may not one expose oneself to risk once too often?' The remark

being conveyed to Gandhiji, he observed 'Yes, that may happen. But a spiritual fast is justified not by its result but by the unquestioning and joyous surrender to His will of which it is the expression. Even death should be welcome if it comes in the performance of one's highest duty.'

Kasturba, along with other political prisoners, was released by the State authorities about an hour after Gandhiji had broken his fast.

## 9 FINAL ARREST

Kasturba's last arrest took place in Bombay on the evening of 9th August 1942—a day which will remain ever memorable in the annals of India's struggle for freedom. In the early hours of the morning of that day, Gandhiji and members of the Working Committee of the Congress had been put under arrest and a general round up of Congress leaders throughout the country had taken place under the Defence of India Rules. Kasturba, like her husband, had put up at Birla House. After Gandhiji's arrest, Kasturba took up the gauntlet and announced her intention to address the meeting at Shivaji Park which Gandhiji was to have addressed that evening. Two Police officers arrived at Birla House in the evening and asked Kasturba if she was determined to address the meeting, and if so, they had orders to arrest her. Kasturba emphatically said 'yes'. She was arrested, with Mr Pyarelal and Dr Sushila Nair for company, and all were taken to the Aga Khan Palace at Poona where Gandhiji had already been removed.

## 10. THE ILLNESS

The first intimation, after her arrest, which the country received of her illness was through a Bombay Government communique issued on March 19, 1943 which said that she had 'two heart attacks during the course of the week. She had recovered from them and was as well as could be expected in a person of her age.' The communique also stated that she was being attended to by Dr Gilder and Lt.-Col. B. Z. Shah.

The next communique about her health dated Dec. 4 said that she had two further heart attacks in the course of the week and that she rallied from them. She was still in a state of weakness. At her request the Government of India agreed to her sons and grandsons seeing her in the detention camp.

As days passed, reports that her condition was deteriorating began to filter through the prison walls and demands began to be addressed to the Government for her release.

The question was raised in the House of Lords on Dec. 15 when Lord Strabolgi asked whether it was the intention of the Government of India to release Mrs Gandhi from detention. The Earl of Munster, Under-Secretary for India, replied: 'The Government of India some time ago considered release on grounds of health but they formed the view, to which they still hold, that it would be in Mrs Gandhi's own interests to remain where she is with one of the most eminent heart-specialists in India living on the premises and able to attend to her at any time.'

The next day, in the House of Commons, to a question by Mr Sorensen whether on grounds of ill health Mrs Gandhi was likely to be released from detention, Mr Amery, Secretary of State, repeated the reply of the Earl of Munster in the Lords Mr Sorensen asked. 'May I ask whether she has had the opportunity and option of leaving if she so desires?'

Mr Amery 'The question of leaving was considered and she has been allowed to see relatives, but following medical advice it is considered that she is most securely situated where she is'

Mr Sorensen 'While appreciating thoroughly all that is being done for Mrs Gandhi, may I take it that if medical advisers or she herself wishes that she should leave incarceration, permission will be given to her to do so?'

Mr Amery 'I must leave that to the Government of India'

A communique from the Government of Bombay dated Dec 20 reported 'another severe heart attack' and her condition, it was stated, 'was continuing to cause anxiety in view of her general frailty and age'

On Dec 24, 1943 the Government of India in a press note said 'Government have seen press comments on the continued detention of Mrs Gandhi in view of her present state of health. Her release would, however, involve separating her from her husband during her illness and since she can receive, and is receiving, every possible medical care and attention where she is and is not debarred from seeing her near relatives, Government have decided

that there would be no kindness either to her or to her family in removing her from the Aga Khan Palace.'

On Jan. 4, 1944 Sjt Devadas Gandhi who had visited his mother, cabled to his brother Mr Manilal in Durban that 'Mrs Gandhi is precarious and scope for medical treatment is limited.'

On Feb. 1, 1944 a Bombay Government communique announced that Kasturba had a severe attack the previous day and that her condition was very weak.

So far the 'official' information about it all. Let us turn to one dear to her and near to us for real enlightenment. Sjt Devadas Gandhi in his statement of Feb. 28 says:

'The illness dated from September 1942, in the detention camp. It was then for the first time that heart symptoms were noticed. She had never had heart attacks before although she had been in indifferent health for the past four or five years. But after the initial setback in September 1942, she never regained normal health.

'It is no exaggeration to say that both physically and mentally she was not equal to the strain of incarceration. She had been through terms of imprisonment before, notably one which included solitary confinement in a village in the interior of Rajkot when she came to the verge of disaster, but this last one was throughout for her the most trying of ordeals in which both the spirit and the body withered. The palatial surroundings and atmosphere were the antithesis of what she was used to. The

barbed wire sencings and the sentries completed the picture. I do no injury to the memory of my dear mother when I tell the public that she pined to get back to what she herself described to me last year as the low-roofed cottages of Sevagram.

The fact of indefinite detention weighed still more heavily upon her and not all the creature comforts of the realm could give her peace of mind and spirit. The thought of thousands of others, some of them intimately known to her, suffering similar restraint made her misery more acute and one of her silent prayers during the past year and a half was that she and Bapu may be kept permanently in detention if only the others could be freed.

'Would her release from prison during the last serious stages of her illness have helped? It would have helped if she had been also offered the option of returning to the detention camp when she desired to do so. That would have constituted a complete formula of "kindness". But the fact remains that she never had the benefit even of the psychological aspect of an offer of release, except the last merciful one from the Maker.'

A last attempt was made on Feb. 8 to move Government to release Kasturba. Mr Govind Deshmukh put a question in the Central Assembly but the Home Member simply quoted the press note of Dec. 24, 1943 in reply. When the Home Member was asked if it was Government's intention not to release *detenus* even when they were seriously ill, the Home Member referred to the case of Mrs Sarojini Naidu who had been released on grounds of health.

Nineteen days later, on Feb. 20, the Government of Bombay in a communiqué announced: 'Mrs Gandhi's condition has been deteriorating for some days past and is now very grave.' Her condition was reported to be the same next day also, and it was stated that the Government of India had arranged to rush by air 'penicillin' from Calcutta to Poona for her treatment.

## II. LAST MOMENTS

The last moments of Kasturba have been vividly described by Devadas in his statement of Feb. 28:

'She never completely lost consciousness till the last moment. When the Government communiqué on Sunday (Feb. 20) pronounced her condition to be grave, she was still hoping against hope to survive the latest phase of her illness. The kidneys had failed to function during the last few days due to the feeble action of the heart and this was complicated by apical pneumonia without fever. The blood pressure had come down to 75/52. The doctors had given up the struggle. When I reached on Monday evening she was in distress which only the devoted nursing of her fellow-detainees could superficially relieve. It was against medical expectation that she survived the night. That was the last night of her earthly existence, every second of which she received the ministration of all her companions and Gandhiji. In a semi-conscious state she would answer questions in monosyllables or by gently shaking her head. Once when Gandhiji came near her she raised her

hand and asked 'who is it?' and then seemed greatly comforted when he attended to her for nearly an hour. Beside her he looked several years younger, although his hands shook. The scene reminded me of the incident in South Africa nearly 32 years ago when mother had just emerged a complete physical wreck from a course of three months' imprisonment there. A European acquaintance meeting both my parents at a railway station said "Mr Gandhi, is this your mother?" In the morning she looked worse but peaceful. On Monday she had clung to a lingering hope. On Tuesday she seemed to be resigned. The mind was at peace and clearer in spite of the gathering effects of uraemia. She had refused all medicine and even water since Monday. But she opened her mouth wide for a drop of Ganges water at midday on Tuesday. It comforted her for a while.

"Then at about 3 P.M. she sent for me and told me that she was going. 'I must go some day, why not today?' she pleaded. I, the last child she had given birth to, was evidently holding her. But with this remark and other tender and sweet words, in the presence of all others she tore herself away from me. Never did her articulation sound clearer, or her words appear choicer to me. Almost immediately after this she joined her hands together, sat up unaided and with her head bowed low she prayed for several minutes in the loudest tone she could manage.

"God my Refuge, Thy Mercy I crave"

That is how I would translate into English the winged words which went up from her again and again. When I left the room to dry my tears,

penicillin had just arrived in the verandah of the Aga Khan's Palace. The doctors had little desire to try it. Pneumonia was only a contributory factor. The final failure of the kidneys would not have been relieved by the penicillin. And besides it was too late. Yet, this wonder-drug for pneumonia was being mechanically got ready. At about 5 o'clock I gathered courage to face mother again. Now she smiled. It was the smile which has spoiled me these 43 years. But it was also a dying mother's last pensive smile to cheer her son. My mother was intensely human. On her behalf I crave the forgiveness of all those who have come into close contact with her, for the extra share of affection she reserved for me. God surely will condone the frailties of one who otherwise lent glamour to His creation. This smile, however, revived my interest in penicillin and I thought it my duty to pursue the matter with the doctors. They were willing to try it but offered little hope of success.

"When Gandhiji came to know that I had approved the idea of giving painful injections to mother he sacrificed his evening walk in the garden to reason with me. "You can't cure your mother now, no matter what wonder-drugs you may muster. I will yield to you if you insist. But you are hopelessly wrong. She has refused all medicines and water these two days. She is in God's hands now. You may interfere, if you wish to, but I advise against the course you are adopting. And remember you are seeking to cause physical pain by an injection every four or six hours to a dying mother."

'It was not for me to argue The doctors felt most relieved

'Just when this sweetest of all wrangles I have ever had with my father was over, word came that mother had called out for him He immediately took over from those who were giving her restful support He leaned her against his shoulder and tried to give her what comfort he could As I stood in front watching along with ten others I saw that the shadow on mother's face had deepened, but she spoke and moved her arms about for fuller comfort'

Besides Mahatmaji with his two sons, Hiralal and Devadas, Dr Sushila Nair, Mr Pyarelal, Mrs Prabhavati Devi, wife of Mr Jaiprakash Narain, Dr Gilder, Mr Kanu Gandhi and Swami Anand had gathered in the room A few of the relatives of Mahatmaji were also present The last man to dash in just before her death, was Kasturba's only brother, Mr Madhavdas Gokuldas

#### *Her son describes the end*

'Then in the twinkling of an eye the collapse came Tears rolled down from several eyes while Gandhiji forced back his The entire group stood in a semi-circle and chanted the favourite prayer which they had been used to say so long in her company Within two minutes she was still As one of the inmates remarked to me, she waited for us to finish our meals The last meal of the day in the detention camp is taken at about 6 PM She died at 7-35 PM'

It was the auspicious night, 'Shivaratri'. The Bombay Government disclosed the tragic event to

the world in the following communique issued in the night of Feb. 22:

'The Government of Bombay regrets to announce that Mrs Kasturba Gandhi passed away at 7-35 P.M. today, at the Aga Khan Palace, Poona.'

## 12. THE CREMATION

Col. Bhandari, Inspector-General of Prisons who had visited the Palace at 6-30 on the evening, again went there at 7-30 and stayed till 11 P.M. Lady Premila Thakersey and Mr Shantikumar Morarji were also allowed inside the Palace at 11 P.M.

Kasturba's body was cremated at 10-40 A.M. on the 23rd. Her last rites were performed by her youngest son Devadas Gandhi. Over a hundred persons, relatives and friends of the Gandhi family, were present at the ceremony.

Dressed in a white khaddar *sari* and covered with an orange-coloured khaddar sheet with *kumkum* (vermillion) anointed on her forehead, Kasturba looked as though she was having a peaceful sleep. Decked with flowers the bier was carried by her sons and relatives from the Palace to the place of cremation, 100 yards away from the building.

The Brahmin priest who officiated at the funeral ceremony of the late Mahadev Desai officiated at this ceremony also. The ceremony itself was a short and simple one.

Swami Anand, Sjt Kanu Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's grand-nephew, Mr Shantikumar Morarji, Mr Kamalanarayan Bajaj and other friends who were present on the occasion arranged the funeral pyre.

As Kasturba's body was lifted from the bier and placed on the pyre, Mahatma Gandhi was visibly moved and with his shawl he was seen wiping his eyes. Excepting for this moment of sentiment, Mahatma Gandhi remained cool throughout and showed no signs of emotion or excitement. All the time he was seen talking to the visitors.

After the preliminary rites of cremation had been performed and the body placed on the pyre, Mahatma Gandhi beckoned to the priest to allow him to conduct a brief service. Recitations from the Koran, the Bhagavadgita and the Bible were made and some of the members of the Ashram sang in chorus a few *bhajans*. Dr M D D Gilder recited a passage from the Zoroastrian sacred texts while Mira Ben recited a Psalm.

The services over, Mahatma Gandhi directed the priest to continue the ceremony and himself stood leaning on his staff. Sandalwood was piled on the body and ghee was poured. Devadas Gandhi with fire in hand went round the body three times and amidst cries of 'Govinda, Govinda, Govinda' lit the funeral pyre.

### 13 SANCHAYAN

The 'Sanchayan' ceremony of Kasturba's ashes was performed in the Aga Khan Palace on Feb 25. Gandhiji, his sons Hiralal, Ramdas and Devadas, and other inmates of the Palace were present on the occasion.

Devadas writes I am on my way to Allahabad, as I write these lines, with her remains which will be

consigned to the Ganges on Monday. These consist of a literal handful of tiny motherly bones. They were collected on Friday by the inmates of the camp with due ritual from the ashes of the pyre. They were then laid out on a banana leaf and after being decorated with flowers and vermillion and incense and after a consecration ceremony they were prepared for the last journey. I am thus travelling in the company of my mother but after tomorrow I know I shall never travel with her again. It was Gandhiji's clear decision that this ceremony of immersion in the confluence of the two great rivers be performed. "What crores of Hindus do as a sacrament is what will please your mother," he said to me. The decision was reinforced by a telegram from the revered Pandit Malaviyaji expressing a wish that this should be done. The bulk of the ashes were, according to custom, consigned in the river Indrayani near Poona.....For me and the little company which visited the riverside before sunrise on Friday morning it was a solemn and uplifting ceremony. A small quantity of ashes collected on the second day after the cremation has been preserved in the detention camp and these include the five glass bangles which formed part of the funeral pyre and were subsequently found intact and unbroken.

'I ought to add a word as to how Gandhiji has stood this ordeal. He was looking obviously sagged. He grieves over this tragic gap which has come into his life, for she in large measure was responsible for what he is today. But he maintains a philosophic calm and keeps his emotions under the control

expected of him. The atmosphere around him was one of sadness without gloom and when my brothers and I parted company with the camp on Friday he cracked his customary jokes as a substitute for tears. His health, I believe, is good.\*

#### 14 INDIA IN MOURNING

Following the death of Kasturba, hartal was observed in very many towns and villages of India and tributes were paid to her memory at public meetings. Municipal Councils, Local Boards, Chambers of Commerce and other public bodies and institutions also paid special tributes to her services to the country. A great many educational institutions were either closed, or had to suspend their work owing to the absence of their pupils. Attempts to hold processions or public meetings led to numerous arrests at several places in the country under the Defence of India Rules.

The Council of State as well as the Bengal, Punjab, Sind, Orissa and Frontier Legislative Assemblies, after passing condolence resolutions, adjourned their business as a mark of respect to the memory of Shrimati Kasturba. Only in the Central Legislative Assembly the President disallowed all references to her on the strange ground that, according to the existing convention such references and motions of condolence can only be made in respect of members of the Assembly.

As a mark of respect to the memory of Kasturba the Bombay Municipal Corporation adjourned. Mr M R Masani the Mayor who was in the chair, said at the outset

'Mrs Kasturba Gandhi although not primarily a political worker, devoted her life to the cause of India's freedom embodied in her great husband's life-work. The fact that she died in prison is a painful reminder to us of the fact that our national aspiration for freedom is still unfulfilled.

'Mrs Gandhi's greatness lay in her complete self-effacement. Her death is not only an irreparable loss to Mahatma Gandhi, whose devoted companion she was for over 60 years—a loss made all the more grievous by reason of his captivity—but also to the teeming millions of her countrymen and women who held her in great esteem and reverence.

'I am sure the Corporation would desire to place on record their sense of sorrow at the death of Mrs Gandhi, and I shall, therefore, call upon Mr Motichand Kapadia to move a resolution in that behalf.'

Responding to the appeal of Pandit Malaviya, Sunday, March 5 was observed in many places throughout the country as Kasturba Day, public meetings being held, prayers being offered and tributes being paid to her manifold services to her country.

The "SOCIETY AND WEEKLY  
Lalgit Chh. ... and Lane,  
Burdwan. 1.

## \*SOME PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

It was an express telegram from Borsad in Kaira district of Gujarat. Squatting near a *segree* on a cold winter morning in a hut of mud and thatch in the little village of Maroli near Navsari, Kasturba Gandhi heard the message conveyed to her on the wires. It was a frantic call from the women of Borsad.

The times were unusual for India. The nation's leaders headed by Gandhiji were behind the massive barricades of Yeravda—or some other prison whose name figures in India's political history. The second phase of the struggle for freedom was on. In Bombay and many other cities khaddar-clad volunteers, both men and women, were either thronging the jails or reaching hospitals on stretchers with broken heads. Already the daily papers were full of vivid accounts of the lathi charge on Azad Maidan of Bombay where hundreds of volunteers faced the police batons in an attempt at paying homage to the tricolour. Close on the heels of this came another lathi charge, more sensational—on a group of women, at Borsad. It was not a mixed group as at Bombay which had faced the determined custodians of law and order. Therein lay the distinctiveness of the incident at Borsad.

'We want Kasturba with us' was the appeal of many women who were lying in Borsad hospitals, dressed in bandages. 'We want her here to inspire confidence in the town.'

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\* From an article contributed by Mr Kalyanpur to *The Bombay Chronicle Weekly* with some additions specially written for this publication.

I saw Kasturba leave the cup of 'rab' (an Ashram equivalent of tea) unsipped on hearing the telegram. She rushed about her hut picking up odds and ends. She was preparing for a dash to Borsad by the next train. Miss Mithuben Petit, her hostess at Maroli was quite nervous at Kasturba's hurry.

'You are having anaemia, Ba,' she pleaded. 'The doctor wants you to rest. Let me attend to Borsad instead.'

Sweet-tempered, soft-spoken Kasturba was never given to arguing. With a solo nod of disagreement with Mithuben, she packed the kit—a handy 'theli' of the Satyagrahi with odds and ends and a rough 'kambal'. 'I must see these children who have faced the police so bravely. I must be with them and give them courage. Bapu would have been with them today. But he is not free.'

In her simple, frank Gujarathi, Kasturba dictated a brief message for Borsad. She referred to the lathi charge in critical terms. She addressed words of hope to Borsad's women whom she was to join without delay.

'Here, release a translation of this to the press,' she told me. Within a few hours I was keeping her company in a bug-ridden third-class railway van on the way to Borsad.

It was a new Kasturba who revealed her personality to me as we journeyed by every manner of transport to Borsad and a hundred other villages in Kaira. She was no more the meek woman who sat quietly in her hut at Maroli, spinning at the 'Charkha' for long hours while some volunteer read the daily

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paper and gave her a list of events. She was totally different from the Kasturba who visited the neighbouring villages of Maroli every evening to explain to the peasants the value of khaddar, not as Gandhiji the leader would explain to them, but as a mother would explain to her children the beauty of an article she would like them to preserve. Here was the wife of India's chosen leader, deputizing for him in the absence of all leaders. She was wanted here, there, — wherever something unusual happened in the first flush of mass enthusiasm. She was like some unknown warrior at the front forced by circumstances to step into the breach following the capture of a general.

It was a pleasure to see Kasturba at work at Borsad. She had forgotten her anaemia. She was on her feet from morning till nightfall. Local leaders had to be met, details of the incidents in the town to be studied, statements to be issued wherever necessary, Satyagrahis in hospitals to be interviewed and cheered. Deputizing for the leader of the vast Congress organization was no easy task. Kasturba attended to every item with leader-like devotion.

Borsad was only the beginning. At Nadiad a group of doctors examined her and raised a scare. She needed immediate rest. 'But I feel fit,' she argued. 'After all I do nothing all my life except follow Bapu from place to place, observe the Ashram rules, and rest. These moments when I have to work like Bapu are so rare. I cannot think of rest now.'



They called it 'hijrat'. It was a queer mass migration of human beings on a scale unknown in the history of India prior to the trial of this technique of 'Satyagraha' in the Bardoli district for the first time in 1928. The experiment was being repeated in 1930. Peasants left everything behind--often full-grown wheat crops uncut or half-burnt in fields, and traversed hundreds of miles in bullock carts. They travelled secretly, under cover of darkness, sometimes by improvised roads, until they arrived at some remote village where no village headman or police constable could call on them for recovery of the yearly land revenue dues.

It was a camp of two hundred 'hijratis' on the outskirts of Bardoli town for which Kasturba was heading late one evening. She had just received a report that cholera and fever had alternately taken a heavy toll of the families of peasants in the camp. To reach the spot was no easy task. The royal road was barred to vehicles that carried people in khaddar dress. The improvised roads across the marshy ground of wheat fields were dangerous. It was the middle of the rainy season. But Kasturba braved every danger and joined the 'hijratis'.

The camp was a picture of rank human suffering. In low mud huts lived human beings and cattle in the same room -- with just a bamboo pole separating them. The huts stank stale, rotting mire. Mosquitoes hovered about, sucking human blood and growing to an enormous size. Children died of cholera or some strange fevers. Their parents were victims of deadly skin-diseases. Everyone suffered

for want of clean water to drink and bathe, within a distance of several miles of the straggling hamlet which had sprung up on the vast expanse of dry sand.

'I will stay in this camp for some time,' announced Kasturba to the Satyagrahi companions who had escorted her. 'But I won't let you stay here because it will be too much of a burden on these poor peasants.'

It was a month devoted to the great task of propping up the peasants' morale which was continually receiving hard knocks at the hands of a cruel fate. Kasturba's presence in the camp in the midst of want and suffering was in the same category as the unexpected appearance of a great general at the psychological moment when the battalion is about to lose nerve. The hour of trial came one day when a peasant rushed to Kasturba wailing. 'I have lost everything, Ba; my only son died of fever a fortnight ago. My wife is dead today — she has left me with a three-months-old daughter. There is no one in the world who can look after her. I am ill with worry and suffering.'

'Ishwar is our guardian,' said Kasturba, in a comforting tone, restraining her own tears with effort. 'Do not worry. You have not sinned against God. His mercy will always protect you. Bapu will call you a brave son of Hindustan. I will help you with all the strength left in me. I will take charge of you and your little baby. Come with me to Bardoli. I must take you away from this camp for a time, till you recover from these shocks.'

There was something extraordinarily human about Kasturba, as she stood by the bereaved peasant at Bardoli, while he tried to get back to a normal frame of mind. She tended the little baby in collaboration with some other women Satyagrahis.

Kasturba's leave-taking from Bardoli had a touch of pathos. She was wanted at Village Undach where six women Satyagrahis were braving the wrath of the village headman who visited their 'Chhavni' from time to time — once with a bunch of coolies who razed the 'Chhavni' to the ground. Kasturba was in a fix. She was torn between two duties, but the peasant came to her aid. 'Please don't worry about me any more,' he pleaded, 'let me not deprive Undach of your help. There are many besides me needing your attention, Ba. Please go.'

Bundling the baby in a rug, the peasant walked up to the stand where Kasturba was to board a bus. A regular procession of Bardoli's simple villagers followed him. Before the bus moved away, Kasturba took the bundle, looked at the baby and prayed: 'May this little *hijrati*, born in the midst of suffering, live long to serve Hindustan.'

Kasturba was on the move again. She seemed to be infused with a new energy. No village was too far when a call came. In times of stress she showed an adaptability rare even among men leaders. She felt as much at home in the crowded railway van as in her homely hut at Sabarmati. She followed the Ashram routine to the last detail while on tour. Her day started with prayer at 4 A.M. Though many villagers would offer to wash her

clothes, Kasturba would stick to the Ashram rule—that each one must wash his or her own clothes. Her hosts in villages had strict instructions from Kasturba that food must be of the simple Ashram type—jowar ‘rotla’ and curry without spices. Even the ‘dal’ had to be cooked without salt. She called it Mori’ dal. The long hours in the train would be spent in getting first-hand account of village work from Satyagrahis who boarded trains at different stages and kept her company for short distances. When she felt like relaxing, she just closed her eyes and recited parts of the *Gita*. She knew it from the beginning to the end though she had taken to its study rather late in life.

Kasturba envied fellow-travellers who were seen engrossed with the contents of a book or a newspaper. ‘How I wish I could enjoy reading like those people,’ she would say in a kind of self-reproach.

‘I am repentant for not having attended school,’ she revealed one day, while preparing to exercise the privilege of a leader—dictating press statements.

‘I was illiterate when I joined Bapu as his life’s partner when I was twelve,’ she told me. ‘He was very anxious I should learn, but my progress was very slow. I took several months to learn the script. But Bapu was very patient with me though sometimes he would feel desperate at my slow progress. I wish I had attended school. If only I knew newspapermen would sometime harass me for statements! But I don’t like newspapermen. They are not truthful while at work.’

Kasturba was conscious that with all the efforts of Bapu, her inroads into spheres of political wisdom were limited. She picked up sufficient knowledge of Gujarathi literature to be able to read newspapers. But she made very little headway with English. Sometimes when I bought a copy of the daily newspaper at a wayside station she would suddenly grab it with enthusiasm, mumble a word or two of the banner head-line, turn over the pages 'for Bapu's photograph' which she seemed to expect often in the papers and raise the usual query: 'Any news of Bapu in jail? What does he say?'

During journeys, Kasturba was anxious to cover the lost ground in her knowledge of contemporary political events. She was aware that during the phases when the mantle of leadership fell on her, it was necessary to keep abreast of events in India. But she suffered under limitations due to early apathy for the three R's. She did not take very kindly to newspapers. She would ask every morning for an outline of political events and cross-question the interpreter in a simple, child-like way. But Kasturba understood the main trends of Gandhian philosophy perfectly. Day after day, as she visited the distant villages of Gujarat, she explained that philosophy to the peasant in a simple straight way which was intelligible to him. Her statements to the press were equally simple and straight.

'Ba' or mother to the vast masses of peasantry in Gujarat and elsewhere, Kasturba wielded a subtle influence over them. During a tour of Bardoli with her, I found that there was not a single village,

however remote, which she had not visited. The peasants came to her often with grievances. Immediately after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, an old peasant came to her at Sarbhon village with a bitter complaint against 'Bapu'—that he had forgotten the peasants. What he meant was that the Pact did not mention anything beneficial to the Gujarat peasantry who had joined in the 'no-tax' campaign of 1930. 'Bapu does everything for the good of the people of India,' she told him. 'He is sure to do you good. Do not worry. I will tell him what you said,' she added.

Kasturba conformed heart and soul to the Hindu ideal of wisdom. She believed in the infallibility of Gandhiji. I had occasion to question her about the few incidents concerning her life which Gandhiji has narrated in his Autobiography. 'Bapu is a great man. He admits his mistakes,' she said, 'but he has never done me any injustice. I have always been in the wrong.'

\* \* \* \*

I had lost touch with Kasturba for four years after Bardoli and Borsad. It was at Sevagram that I saw her one day in 1935. She was squatting on the verandah of a mud hut, with glasses loosely perched on her nose, cleaning some grain for the kitchen. The picture was different from the one I had seen in Gujarat in 1931. Following a hectic tour with Gandhiji for the Harijan campaign, she had settled down to a quiet life. There was the world famous two room 'jhopdi' on her right where Gandhiji sat at a low desk, writing away for the *Harijan*, or

spinning at the Dhanush Takli. Kasturba looked after him tenderly while Miraben lent a helping hand. Sometimes, Kasturba attended to the little nursery where Miraben grew choice green vegetables for Bapu's salad.

I had the privilege of seeing Kasturba in this setting quite often after 1935. It seemed as though for the rest of her life she had chosen the one course nearest her heart—to be the custodian of Gandhiji's physical well-being, every minute of her life. She had of course been such a custodian all her life in more senses than one. For instance, it is to her that Gandhiji owes the idea of drinking goat's milk which has contributed so much to his good health.

The story is told by Mrs Pollock: some years after Gandhiji took a vow not to drink milk, he was faced with a predicament. He fell seriously ill and the doctors insisted on his drinking milk. Gandhiji would not listen to the doctors' advice in view of the vow. It was Kasturba who found a way out. Bapu, she argued, was under a vow not to drink milk. What people mean by milk is cow's or buffalo's milk. There was no breach of the vow if Bapu took goat's milk. The doctors found the suggestion handy, and Gandhiji began to take goat's milk.

There may have been several other occasions, not known to the world outside Sabarmati or Wardha when Kasturba helped Gandhiji with suggestions. But to most people who came into contact with her, Kasturba presented the picture of one who had completely submerged her personality. In later years

at Sevagram, she seemed to be fulfilling only one role--the role of a silent sharer of Gandhiji's worries and occasional sorrows I have vivid recollections of seeing her in this role once. It was a bleak morning during monsoon Wardha was in gloom over sudden deaths occurring amongst a number of Ashramites lying ill Uncharitable critics connected this with a dietetic experiment which the 'victims' had conducted with a beverage called 'Nira' Gandhiji was in great mental distress Kasturba kept following him like a shadow while he went from patient to patient She looked pale with worry when I met her in the evening 'You look so ill, Ba,' I said. 'Have you not been keeping good health?'

'I am not unwell except in mind,' she replied. 'Bapu is worried and his worry is always my worry.'

\* \* \* \* \*

I cannot think of Kasturba on this occasion without recalling an incident in which I have a personal interest It was 1931 I had just returned to Maroli village after an extensive tour with Kasturba. I looked forward to another outing in the villages But my dream was cut short when one morning my mother traced me down to Maroli village She was worried because of my wandering life She wanted me back at home I was quite in a fix Being a cub reporter, I loved wandering And it was so grand to be under the tender, maternal care of Kasturba 'Please inform Kasturba before we leave Maroli,' I pleaded with my mother She agreed And that settled my problem

I was present at the brief interview during which Kasturba brought about a complete change of heart in my mother.

'He is our only son,' pleaded my mother. 'We want him back with us. We are worried when he is away.'

Kasturba smiled. 'You are lucky,' she said in reply. 'You are worried about only one son. I have three, all of whom are away from me—working for Hindustan. Have you any daughters?'

My mother sighed and said her only daughter was away too. She was married and was far away at her husband's.

'You are lucky,' was Kasturba's rejoinder, 'very lucky. You have at least a daughter of your own. It must be grand to be loved by a daughter. I have no daughter of my own. I took one by adoption. She is Laxmi whom I took from a Harijan family. But even she is denied to me. Bapu is away; my sons are away; Laxmi is away—all working for Hindustan. But I am happy that they are away for the sake of the country.'

## APPENDIX I

### A MOTHER'S ANGUISH

THE following letter addressed by Kasturba Gandhi sometime in September 1936 to her eldest son, the volatile and erring Hiralal, who had got himself converted into a Muslim bespeaks the anguish of the mother's heart :

My Dear Son Hiralal,

I have heard that recently in Madras policemen found you misbehaving in a state of drunkenness at midnight in an open street and took you into custody. Next day, you were produced before a bench of magistrates and they fined you Re. 1. They must have been very good to treat you so leniently.

Even the magistrates showed regard for your father in thus giving you only a nominal punishment. But I have been feeling very miserable ever since I heard about this incident. I do not know whether you were alone that night or accompanied by some of your friends, but in any case you acted very improperly.

I do not know what to say to you. I have been pleading with you all these long years to hold yourself in check. But you have been going from bad to worse. Now you are making my very existence impossible. Think of the misery you are causing to your aged parents in the evening of their lives.

Your father says nothing to anyone, but I know how the shocks you are giving him are breaking his heart. You are committing a sin in thus repeatedly hurting our feelings. Though born as a son, you are indeed behaving like an enemy.

I am told that in your recent wanderings you have been criticizing and ridiculing your great father. This does not behove such an intelligent boy as you. You little realize that you only disgrace yourself by speaking evil of your father. He has nothing but love in his heart for you. You know that he attaches the greatest importance to purity of conduct. But you have never paid any

heed to his advice Yet he has offered to keep you with him, to feed and clothe you, and even nurse you

He has so many other responsibilities in this world He cannot do more for you He can only lament his fate God has given him great will-power and may God grant him as long a life as he may require for fulfilling his mission on this earth But I am a frail old woman and unable to stand the mental anguish you are causing me

Your father daily gets letters from people complaining about your conduct He has to suffer all this disgrace But you have left no place for me anywhere. For sheer shame, I am unable to move about among friends or strangers Your father will always pardon you, but God will not tolerate your conduct

At Madras you were the guest of some prominent person But you abused his hospitality by leaving his roof and misconducting yourself in the manner reported It cannot but have embarrassed your host.

Every morning, I rise with a shudder to think what fresh news of disgrace the newspapers will bring I sometimes wonder where you are, where you sleep and what you eat Perhaps, you take forbidden food That and other similar thoughts give me sleepless nights I often feel like meeting you But I do not know where to find you You are my eldest son and nearly 50 years old I am even afraid of approaching you lest you humiliate me

I do not know why you changed your ancient religion That is your affair But I hear that you go about asking innocent and ignorant people to follow your example Why will you not realize your limitations? What do you know about religion? What judgment can you exercise in your mental condition? People are liable to be led away by the fact that you are your father's son You are not fit to preach religion In time to come if you go on like this you will be shunned by all alike I beseech you to pause and consider and turn back from your folly

I did not like your conversion, but when I saw your statement that you had decided to improve yourself, I felt secretly glad even about conversion hoping that

you would now start leading a sober life. But that hope too is dashed to pieces.

You know how unhappy your son is on account of your behaviour. Your daughters and your son-in-law also bear with increasing difficulty the burden of sorrow your conduct has imposed upon them.

### TO HIS MUSLIM FRIENDS

Kasturba addressed also the following letter to the Muslim friends of Hiralal :

I am only referring to those of you who are taking an active part in my son's recent activities. I have not been able to understand your action. I know and I am glad to think that a large number of thinking Mussalmans and all our life-long Muslim friends condemn the whole of this episode.

Instead of redeeming my son I find his so-called change of faith has actually made matters worse. Some people have even gone to the length of supplying the title of 'Maulvi' to him. Is this fair? Does your religion permit such persons as my son being called Maulvi?

I do not understand what pleasures you find in sometimes lionizing him. What you are doing is not at all in his interest. If your desire is mainly to hold us up to ridicule, I have nothing to say to you. You may do your worst.

But the feeble voice of a stricken mother will perhaps quicken the consciences of those who may be in a position to influence you. I feel it my duty to repeat to you what I am telling my son, namely, that you are not doing the right thing in the eyes of God.

## APPENDIX II

### (A) TRIBUTES FROM INDIANS

*Shrimati Sarojini Naidu*—Peace to the spirit of the frail and valiant woman who was the living symbol of Indian womanhood. Never once did her feet falter or her heart quail on the steep path of perpetual sacrifice which was her portion in the wake of the great man whom she loved and served and followed with such surpassing courage, faith and devotion. Let us rejoice that she has passed from mortality to immortality and taken her rightful place in the valiant assembly of the beloved heroines of India's legend, history and song.

*Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya* (*in a telegram addressed to Gandhiji*)—Deeply grieved hear Ba has passed away. Matter for sincere thankfulness she has departed 'Sowbhagyavati' a thing our women pray for. Country shares your sorrow.

*Sir S Radhakrishnan*—When the names of the political and military leaders which are today in the front news are lost to memory, when their contributions, seemingly significant, sink into oblivion Gandhi's name will be remembered as a liberator of humanity and prophet of the future.

Mrs Gandhi whose death we mourn today, by her selfless devotion and complete identification with his aim and ideals, has wrought for herself a permanent place in the history of India's struggle for freedom. She was his constant and unfailing companion for nearly 60 years and stood by him in storm and stress, in cloud and rain. She suffered with him in India and South Africa, and even at the time of her death was by his side in the Aga Khan Palace. She describes oneness in happiness and suffering as the ideal of married life.

It is not a light task to be the wife of a hero who uses suffering as the method of purification and progress. And if Mrs Gandhi played her part so nobly it is not due to her wealthy possessions it is not due to the prowess of her mind or beauty of form it is due entirely

to her complete devotion and surrender to him. As a matter of fact Gandhiji is never tired of saying that he learned the method of Satyagraha from his wife. In love and suffering, women are the supreme artists, while we are blundering amateurs. They are by no means a weaker sex. They are the braver and the stronger, and so the nobler. They are nearer to life and closer to reality.

Last February about this time, when Gandhiji's health consequent on the fast he undertook, was in a precarious condition and gave us all anxiety, his firm faith in God as well as his wife's faith in the power of love pure and intense, a love that is stronger than death, enabled him to survive the fast, and give his wife the solace for a Hindu woman: to die even while her husband and children are hale and hearty. Kasturba's silent suffering and sacrifice, humility and faith remind us of the great women of India, Anasuya and Arundhati, who have never found fame, but whose selfless existence has helped to civilize the race.

In this hour of trial and sorrow, when another link that binds him to earthly existence has severed, let us express to Gandhiji and his sons, our keen sympathy. Let us tell them that we feel with them and we feel for them. Kasturba's body is reduced to ashes, but her spirit lives. This is the Lord's assurance—that his devotee never perishes.

*Rt.-Hon. Dr M. R. Jayakar.*—Mahadev Desai first, then Kasturba. One sorrow after another. Government are lending unforeseen sanctity to prison life. Years ago when I knew the Mahatma well, he used to regard sorrow as a purification. If this is still his view, these afflictions are so many pedestals placed in his path to climb higher and higher.

*Rt.-Hon. Sir Tej B. Sapru.*—I am extremely sorry to hear of the death of Mrs Kasturba Gandhi, the beloved wife of Mahatma Gandhi. The circumstances in which she has died will add to the poignancy of the grief to her family, her relations and friends, and her country. I have no doubt that the Mahatma will bear his loss irreparable as it is, with that spirit of philosophy and resignation which is characteristic of him.

*Veer Savarkar (in a telegram to Gandhiji)*—With a heavy heart I mourn the death of Kasturba A faithful wife and an affectionate mother, she died a noble death in the service of God and man Your grief is shared by the whole nation

*Shrimati Krishna Hutheesing*—It is not easy to be the wife of a great man, nor is the role an envious one Many women, wives of celebrities, have found it very difficult to live up to their famous husbands, to put up with their whims and fancies uncomplainingly, and never resent playing second fiddle Some have succeeded, others have not Among those who have succeeded and have out shone their husbands is Kasturba Gandhi, the frail but courageous wife of Mahatma Gandhi

Always overshadowed by the personality of her world famous husband, she has in her own quiet, gentle and unassuming manner retained her personality, and has sacrificed much to keep in pace with her great husband She has ever kept in the background, willingly giving up all that was rightfully hers to millions of others During the forty odd years that Kasturba or 'Ba' as she is lovingly called by thousands to whom she is a symbol of India's womanhood, has seldom had her husband to herself And yet perhaps, this very deprivation by which she shared Bapu with the rest of India may have given her great peace She knew that greatness such as her husband's could not be confined to one home or even to one country

Bapu is undoubtedly the greatest man of our times, but to me Ba is even greater It needs great strength of character to surrender uncomplainingly what is rightfully yours, to never regret it nor grudge having done so Life has not been kind to Ba She has suffered more than a great many people and yet it has never embittered her On the contrary, it has made her a much finer person All her life has been one of untiring and selfless service, to the man whom she married and to the country to which she dedicated her life Though there might be certain things about Bapu that may not be comprehensible at times even to Ba, her loyalty to him has been unwavering

*Shri Anirittal V Thakkar*—Kasturba's name has been immortalized because of her great devotion to

Gandhiji and her selfless work for the motherland. As one of the great 'Satis' of India, she will illumine the path of world's womanhood.

*Dowager Maharani Sahiba Lalita Kumari Devi of Vizianagram.*—The greatest woman has passed away. Just like Yashodhara she knew only to obey the commands of her husband. I remember having read in the *Harijan* Bapu's telegram to Mira Ben when he performed his fast for 21 days—not the last fast but the one previous to Rajkot—'Tell her, her father gave her to a man whose weight would have crushed any woman. I cherish her love.' I had the privilege of living with her... Throughout my stay at Sevagram she was a mother to me. It used to be the greatest sacred treat to me to watch her light her little ghee-lamp in the room—symbol of the universal light—which she did every morning and evening. The little light, though it was dim, created a hallow round her head which I was able to perceive while she was unconscious of it. Just like a burnt-out candle in a closed room she perhaps may go to the ashes where Mahadeo Bhai received his *Moksha*.

*Maharajkumar Sir Vijaya.*—The shocking news that was broadcast last night cast a gloom over every section and community in this country. Mrs Gandhi was universally known to everybody as 'Ba'. Whenever anybody visited or stayed at Sevagram Ashram, in spite of her age she used to serve her guests with her own hands and enquire into their comforts in the minutest details. Her passing away has robbed Indians of their mother. Let us all prayerfully ask Almighty that Mahatmaji be given strength to stand yet another loss in the passing away of 'Ba'—our mother, his beloved Dharma Patni.

*Acharya Sir P. C. Ray.*—Mrs Kasturba Gandhi's death in jail is a slur on the Government of India. The heart of the whole of India is with Mahatma Gandhi in his bereavement.

*Dr B. C. Roy.*—Throughout his eventful life, through joy and suffering, Gandhiji has had Kasturba at his side, giving him single-minded devotion and silent comradeship. News comes that Kasturba is no more. Gandhiji is a man of God. He will, I am convinced, bear the cross with fortitude and calmness because it is God's will.

*Shri Shri Prakash, M.L.A*—Not only India but the world is poorer today by the loss of one of the noblest women that have ever lived To be the wife of a being like Mahatmaji entails a burden that few can bear and that 'Ba'—she was really a 'Ba', that is mother, to us all—should have borne the burden so cheerfully, so steadfastly, so triumphantly, throughout her husband's stormy life, for over 60 years is a record of which any woman can be proud

*Mr S A Breli*—Gandhiji, a great soul, was normally beyond the common joys and sorrows of the world But the loss of one, who for long sixty years had been his companion in the struggles he had waged and the ordeals he had gone through, coming as it did so quickly after the passing away of his greatest friend, Mahadev Desai, had also profoundly moved him Kasturba represented in her all the goodness and purity which womanhood in India for ages has adored To them she would for all time remain the idol

*Shri K. M. Munshi*—Kasturba's death removes from us the noblest woman of modern times A true comrade of Gandhiji, the heroic soul who lived that he may fulfil his flaming mission in life, she was like Sita and Savitri, epic in her single-minded self-surrender to her husband To Gandhiji, strong as he is beyond the measure of man, her death is a blow We who loved her as a mother feel the loss of the motherless

*Shri N R Sarkar*—Mahatmaji has reached a stage where the sorrow and anguish that flesh is heir to cannot overwhelm him, even if they pain him, for those who had the opportunity to see Mahatmaji at close quarters know how much this silent, devoted consort of his who shared all his troubles and was by his side throughout as a real 'sahadharmini' in the true spirit and ideal of Indian womanhood, meant to Mahatmaji

*Dr S S Ansari (General Secretary of the Azad Muslim Board)*—India will mourn the death of Mrs Kasturba Gandhi, but to those of us who have had the honour of knowing her her passing away is a great personal loss To me, who had known her for the last 25 years, she had always been like a mother and as such I grieve her passing away which is all the more poignant on

account of the circumstances in which it occurred. She shared the sorrows and sacrifices of her illustrious husband, as a true life-long partner. I pay my humble tribute to her memory and my heart goes out to Mahatma Gandhi: Heart and soul with you in sorrow and grief, Ba has been a mother to us and as such we mourn her loss.

*Sir A. H. Ghaznavi, M.L.A.*—The passing away of such a prominent figure will leave a void in the public life of India. Mrs Gandhi was a source of inspiration and courage to her illustrious husband and our sympathies go forth to Mr Gandhi in his great sorrow.

*Shri C. Rajagopalachari*.—Ba was born to be a queen and she attained that status—through a queer and toilsome path. Let us reserve our emotion for the living. The dead do not require it, for their play is over. May the peace of Ba and Mahadev be undisturbed.

*Dr Syed Niyamatullah (Mayor of Madras)*.—The death of Mrs Gandhi must be a shock to Mahatmaji and an irreparable loss to him. Considering the devotion of Mahatmaji towards her, the country should request him to bear the loss with patience so that it may not tell upon his health and that he may be spared to serve the country for a long time.

*Shri B. Sambanurty*.—Kasturba Gandhi was universally revered as a virtual mother for the millions of India. She had all along been a source of great inspiration and comfort to the Mahatma in his unique service to humanity. Her demise is a great and irreparable loss. She died the death of a great heroine and India shall, for long, remember the cruel circumstances under which this saintly soul had to depart from this mundane plane.

*Mr M. Yunus, Bar-at-Law (ex-Premier, Behar)*.—In the death of Mrs Kasturba Gandhi, India has lost a grand lady whose influence in the political and social life of the country was markedly felt since soon after her return to India from South Africa. She lived a life of service to the nation and stood by her husband in all his trials and tribulations. It will be some consolation to Mahatma Gandhi to know that every soul in the country mourns and shares his sorrow on this occasion.

*Shri Sampurnanand*.—In the death of Kasturba Mabatmaji has lost not only his wife but a devoted

friend The way in which she followed him in his long career of suffering and sacrifice notwithstanding differences of opinion offers a noble ideal for Indian womanhood Mahatmaji has conquered most of the failings of ordinary humanity but one trembles to think of the possible consequences of this bereavement coming to him at this age and in these abnormal circumstances

*Dr Syed Abdul Latif* —It is a highly sad thing to lose a lifelong companion in one's old age Her death will intensify Mahatma Gandhi's present loneliness India has lost an inspiring example of true womanhood

*Sadhu T L Vaswani* —Kasturba was in her simplicity and service, a picture of the Indian ideal of womanhood She has passed on The picture abides

*Dr Amaranath Jha* —Mrs Gandhi's life has been one of simple and unostentatious service Her memory will be treasured both for what she was and what she has achieved

*Mr M R Masani (Mayor of Bombay)* —Kasturba Gandhi's greatness lay in her self-effacement She was content to subordinate her own feelings and desires to furthering the cause of Indian freedom embodied in her husband's life work Our hearts go out to our great national leader in his loss which is all the more grievous because of his enforced isolation, and I know that the citizens of Bombay would like me on their behalf, to extend to Mahatma Gandhi their respectful condolences

#### (B) TRIBUTES FROM THE INDIAN PRESS

*The Hindustan Times (New Delhi)* —The brave spirit of Kasturba Gandhi is no more It is another piercing blow to the anguished heart of her people separated, by prison bars from their leaders It is typical of her life of toil and devotion to her country that she has laid down her life in prison It is typical also of the Government's policy that despite appeals from all parts of the world, they insisted on keeping her in detention till the end All India will join in paying their respectful homage to the memory of Kasturba and her life of saintly service which has served as a model to India's womanhood and an inspiration to countless millions In her frail figure

was centred a heroic spirit which knew no fear and counted no sacrifice too great for the service of her people. Always by the side of her husband to aid him in his great mission, ever ready to march into prison or face any of the risks and privations of the hard political life which is the lot of all subject peoples, and working throughout with a cheerfulness and simplicity which illumined wherever she went, Kasturba had an unforgettable personality. No one owes more to her than Mahatma Gandhi himself whose constant helpmate she was for over forty years. It can be truly said of Kasturba that she found her happiness in his work, his ideals were hers, and so complete was the identity between the two that, throughout these troubled years, they worked as one in the country's cause. She gave of her best unquestioningly. It is a grievous loss to Mahatma Gandhi that within less than two years he has had to part with his two devoted comrades who were part and parcel of his life—first, Mahadev Desai, and now his wife, Kasturba, whom Providence has called away. The prayers of his people will all be with him today in the loneliness of his detention to bear him up in his great sorrow. Over twenty years ago, Kasturba herself gave a message to her countrymen which summed up her own life and work. She said thus:

‘The remedy, therefore, lies with us. If we fail, the fault will be ours. I, therefore, appeal to all men and women who feel for me and have regard for my husband to whole-heartedly concentrate on the constructive programme and make it a success.’

These words come back to us today with renewed force, for, to her, service of the people was a passion which animated her whole being. Undaunted by failure or discouragement, she pursued her allotted task with courage and faith in the ultimate future which knew no defeat. No life which was spent in such selfless service can ever be in vain. To her sorrowing people, the lesson of her life will certainly not be lost.

*Dawn (New Delhi)*—Highly unsophisticated herself, Kasturba's devout concern was not to be an impediment in the extraordinary courses of action upon which her remarkable husband would periodically embark. For

any woman to watch by the side of a husband undertaking prolonged fasts, sometimes according to capacity, sometimes unto death, must be a harrowing ordeal, but she endured all, resignation personified. Aged, nerve-wracked, and frail of body, she could not withstand the heart-aches in spite of the best medical attention and wonder-drug treatment. Blissfully as she would have it, she breathed her last with her husband beside her. Mahadev Desai's sudden death through heart failure had been a great loss in Mr Gandhi's entourage, the loss was felt by all classes of people in India among whom he was a favourite because of his simplicity and literary attainments. The passing away of Kasturba comes as another source of sorrow, and all will sympathize with Mr Gandhi in his bereavement.

*National Call (New Delhi)*—No woman in recent Indian history has evoked such universal sense of grief and such profound sense of respect as has been offered to her memory from every corner of India. She died a soldier's death, although all her life she was the very embodiment of innocence and simplicity. She, who would not hurt a fly had to die a prisoner of the mightiest empire in history. So long as the name of Kasturba is remembered, so long will the stigma of the tragedy to which she has become a victim, permanently remain on British imperialism.

In Kasturba, Mahatma Gandhi has lost a devoted and affectionate wife and India a woman who was the embodiment of all the virtues, of purity and nobility, grace and chastity, sacrifice and endurance, which have been the heritage of Indian womanhood. From the age of 13 with almost blind faith, she linked her destiny to a man who has lived always for others and never for himself. Thus all her life she lived for others and knew neither domestic happiness nor domestic peace. Her greatest pleasure, her profound joy, lay in blindly following the foot steps of her husband and knowing no sacrifice too great if thereby she could either please him or live up to his high standards.

*Anrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta)*—There was something magnificent in her self-effacement that India associates with her womanhood. Her name has been linked

with the most sacred memories of Sita and Savitri but she was something more than even these glorious idols of Indian womanhood.

Kasturba had not only shared the joys and sorrows of Mahatmaji and, within her limits, his great work of political and social uplift; she had succeeded on many occasions where Mahatmaji had failed. Her natural modesty and her single-minded devotion and unparalleled spirit of sacrifice had lent her a quiet strength that made her name almost as appealing as that of her great husband.

With none of the benefits of modern education, with none of the advantages of a progressive family tradition, Kasturba had, by dint of the great devotion to the cause to which Mahatmaji has dedicated himself, spent herself in the service of the Motherland. She was the very best of Indian womanhood and has died, as all Indian women do desire to die, leaving her husband behind. She has left an example that will live in the memory of generations.

*The Hindu (Madras).*—Her life was one long act of faith. Made for happy domesticity, for the best part of her long life she knew less than most women the comforts of privacy or the amenities of ordered existence. It was one long fight in a cause which, in the early days, she but imperfectly understood ; but through all the trials and tribulations of which she had a greater share than falls to most mortals, she was sustained by a supreme fidelity to duty as she conceived it and by a child-like trust in the man by whose side she trod so bravely. . . . No match to her illustrious husband in intellect, she yet found little difficulty in adjusting her pace to his ; what she lacked in subtlety she made up by her honesty and intuitive sympathy. Shrewd and unassuming, homely and yet full of the wisdom that comes from the heart, serene through much suffering borne without bitterness, she was a true helpmate to the great man whose life fate had linked to hers and a tower of strength to all who needed sympathy or succour. In every sense of the word she was a great lady.

*Indian Express (Madras).*—Kasturba's death in prison is symbolic of the situation in India. The prison, within

the walls of which the spirit passed out of her long suffering body, was symbolic of the larger prison house that is India. And her meek and undaunted spirit which accepted no defeat or surrender is symbolic of the resurgent spirit of India marching steadfastly to freedom, against the heaviest odds. In life she served India with all her will and strength. In death she has set an example of exalted duty and deathless devotion which will inspire India to redouble its efforts to win and secure freedom.

What can one say of a Government which permitted her death to happen within prison walls? The millions of those in India who today mourn her death know that she died a prisoner because India itself lives in prison. That thought will inspire them, more than anything else, to persist in the struggle for the freedom of the nation. Thus, as in life so in death, Kasturba Gandhi has pointed the way to the liberation of the motherland. But even so what has died is only the perishable body. The imperishable spirit of Kasturba will for ever hover over the land which she so deeply loved and so vitally served.

*The Bombay Chronicle (Bombay)*—She carried on her shoulders the sorrows of a nation in subjection and her devotion to the cause of the emancipation of the country from thralldom was surpassed by none. Kasturba has died in harness. Her life of selfless devotion to the cause of freedom is cut short. Her death within prison walls will ever remain a blazing reminder to those left behind to complete her work, that the path to success lies in sacrifice.

*The Times of India (Bombay)*—To be the wife of a great man is in itself the most difficult of tasks. For sixty years she shared with unobtrusiveness the toils and tribulations of her husband and earned for herself perhaps without realizing it a unique place in the annals of devoted wifehood. Seldom have the wives of great men earned so much gratitude. Kasturba Gandhi's simple and unassuming way of life was an immense comfort to her husband. She was a brave woman and her example will remain enshrined in the memory of the Indian people. At such a time it is fitting to forget

political differences and to extend sincere sympathy to Mr Gandhi.

*The Free Press Journal (Bombay).*—In the passing away of Kasturba, Gandhiji has lost his partner in life, India a dutiful daughter, and Hindu womanhood one of its noblest ornaments. Smallish and wizened in appearance, yet withal she bore herself with a dignity and charm that inspired universal affection. Her fragile frame enclosed a spirit of steel.

It was a great part which Fate assigned to her in life—the nurturing of a dynamic genius who dared to make experiment with Truth itself. And it is a measure of her courage and idealism that she succeeded in earning those magnificent tributes from her illustrious husband. The secret of her success in this sphere was her cheerful acceptance and matchless devotion to Hindu ideals.

*'Recluse' in The Indian Social Reformer (Bombay).*—Kasturba had a sort of maternal feeling for everyone who rendered the least service or sacrifice in a cause espoused by Gandhiji. She seemed to know every Deshsevika by sight and many by their names. There were hundreds of them.

We had been guests at Sabarmati Ashram and had noticed how while her hands were busy with some domestic detail Kasturba's eyes watched everything and everybody with tender solicitude. Women are said to have the gift of peripheral vision. They see not only what is straight before them but also what is around, which is ordinarily unnoticed by men. Kasturba had this in a superlative measure. The whole life of the Ashram would have come to a standstill but for the solicitous eye of Kasturba. So much we could see and did see in the few hours in the Ashram.

My daughter was running a charkha class and Kasturba with Janakibai Bajaj and Ratanben Mehta came to inspect it. At parting Kasturba had remarked: 'It is like Ashram.' That was a cherished memory.

My first feeling on hearing the news was one of relief. I have watched the agony of heart attack. To watch it is itself an agony. Kasturba had had several in recent months. Those reported in recent days were

described as grave. She would have no more to suffer them. That was a relief to her.

My second thought was for Gandhiji himself. But for the security assured to him by Kasturba in the background he would not have been able to attempt or achieve a tenth of what he has in his crowded and abundant life. This is true of most men; it is pre-eminently true of Gandhiji. There have been many instances of men who figure prominently in history whose home-life was discordant and unhappy. But their activities lay on the ephemeral fields of politics. Gandhiji's abiding work is not in the political field although it has brought him most publicity. He has touched the springs of the Indian hearts and transformed the lives of hundreds of homes. This he could not have done but for the strength which Kasturba's presence in the background constantly afforded him.

The Indian National Congress is acknowledged universally to be the greatest political organization, gladly by many, regretfully by some, grudgingly by some others, and enviously by not a few. Gandhiji's personality, of course, is a great factor. That explains, however, the surface and not the depth to which Congress ideas have penetrated. The stability of any movement is directly proportionate to the backing which it has from women. That the Congress is the most stable of our national movements, is due to the fact that the women of India are solidly behind it. That they are behind it is almost wholly due to Kasturba. Calling my attention to this fact, Kamakoti said that she herself would not have been attracted to satyagraha but for Kasturba being at the side of Gandhiji. Hundreds thousands, I have no doubt, felt like her.

My third thought on hearing of Kasturba's death was that there was no more chance of Gandhiji securing release from detention through any formula acceptable to the authorities. If he would not do it to spare Kasturba he would not do it to spare himself.

*Blit (Bombay)*—What experiences did not this gentle, martyred woman live during the long years she stood by and sustained Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in the battles he fought first in Africa and later, in this

country! No woman could possibly have had a harder life or one of greater trials and tribulations. No woman could have gone through all that this little brave woman went through as we know, with the gladness of heart and inspiring and touching faith that only women of her nature are privileged to possess in such an extraordinary measure.

Life had sweetened, not soured, that rich, responsive woman's nature. The wife of the Mahatma chose to live in the shadow of the great man. Her life was a beautiful poem in self-effacement, love and service which could well—out of the womanly heart. The little woman with the calm, impassive and kindly face brought up a family in the midst of a never-ending struggle in which she was so completely involved. Her mother-love sought its fulfilment in struggle and love for the humanity that broke into the stream of life of the husband and wife.

*Social Welfare (Bombay).*—Wealth, she knew not. Pomp, she never displayed. Power, she tasted not. And Authority, she never exercised. Yet hers was a full and rich life. Its wealth was the Affection which gave. Its power was the power of Sacrifice. And its authority was the authority of Love. Learning she did not have but yet what great lessons she taught to every one around. Without learning, without wealth, without pomp and without power she won a homage that queens might have envied. In her humility, her gentleness, her affectionate disposition, her matchless spirit of endurance and her boundless capacity for self-sacrifice she represented the uncrowned majesty of Indian Womanhood.

*Forum (Bombay).*—The Mahatma's noble spouse was laid unto her final rest on Ash Wednesday, the day when Christendom solemnly enters into the period of forty days' penance to mark the supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ. All over the world, Christians, true and humble, put the Sign of the Cross on their forehead with ashes to remind themselves that theirs is the final lot to be mixed with mere ashes. 'Sack cloth and ashes' were not the much-trumpeted Wavellian requisites for Congressmen; but Kasturba was the greatest offering made by nationalist India to the Moloch of white Christian British Imperialism! Kasturba was not only the wife of the

greatest man in the world. Hers was not the reflected glory of a radiant sun. She had won her place in the affections of men by that serene self effacement with which she made her husband a gift to the people.

*People's Voice (Bombay)*—She was a shining example of the subordination of one's personal life to a great and noble cause—the cause of liberation. A kind mother, a loving friend and a devoted wife it is as a tireless ageless fighter for liberty who ailed and died in detention that India will remember her for ever. Kasturba is gone but her selfless spirit will inspire millions all over the land.

*The Searchlight (Patna)*—By her selfless devotion and wonderful capacity for silent suffering and sacrifice she was in every way fitted to play the role which Providence had assigned to her in life as the consort of a great hero and she did acquit herself admirably well through all the storm and stress of her own life and the life of her illustrious husband.

*The Tribune (Lahore)*—To Gandhiji this ending of a life's comradeship cannot but be a matter of profound sorrow though he will have the consolation that the whole nation shares his grief with him. But even he would not have wished that she who stood loyally by him all through the trouble and turmoil of his life and shared with him all his trials and tribulations should have had a different end. In the illumined pages of the history of the struggle for freedom of this country her name will occupy an honoured place and as years pass it is sure to gain more imperishable renown. For the second time in about eighteen months the gates of the Aga Khan Palace have been flung open to tell the world the story of a second martyrdom. But the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church and we have no doubt that by their death Mahadev Desai and Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi have brought the day of the country's freedom nearer.

*The Leader (Allahabad)*—For well nigh half a century it was her constant endeavour to prove a true partner in life to her great husband to help and not hamper him in his progress on the path of renunciation and service to merge herself in the furtherance of the

ideals dear to him. So well did she play the role allotted to her that she always enjoyed the love and respect of her husband and the adoring affection of her countrymen who gradually came to look upon her as mother. And the courage she showed in accepting her part of suffering and sacrifice in the service of the Motherland served as an inspiring example to the women of the land.

*The Daily Gazette (Karachi).*—Mrs Gandhi was an ideal Hindu wife in every sense of the term. To put up with her husband's idiosyncrasies could have been no easy task but she bore them cheerfully, resigning her right over her husband who had already dedicated himself to the cause of humanity. She served him with a single-minded devotion which won the admiration of every one who came in contact with her.

*The Sind Observer (Karachi).*—She was his devoted companion in his long journey of life full of vicissitudes, high adventures, noble purposes and achievements, trials, disappointments and sorrows, personal and national—a great and noble woman who never for one moment doubted the integrity and high aims of her husband, his saintly character, his compassion for the poor, the lowliest and the lost, and who, like Parvati, was always by the side of her Parameshwar. She devoted every fibre of her body, every faculty of her mind, and all the strength of her soul to sustain and comfort him in his struggles for the liberation of his country and the peace and happiness of mankind.

*The Independent (Nagpur).*—In the death of Mrs Kasturba Gandhi an epic of Indian womanhood comes to a close. Few women in the history of the world had to shoulder the duties, responsibilities, cares, anxieties and sufferings which befell Kasturba as the wife of one of the greatest men of all times—a man whose life though unique for its achievements is perhaps more unique for its cavalcade of suffering. Gandhiji's mission in life is to uplift humanity; Kasturba's mission was to nurse, nurture and strengthen this missionary. Thus humanity has reason to be grateful not only to Gandhiji but to Kasturba too. The finest merit of Kasturba is said to be her self-effacement, but a person living under the wings of such blinding eminence as Gandhiji's, must

necessarily accept a role of self-effacement. This fact does not take away an iota of greatness which was Kasturba's own.

*The Hitavada (Nagpur)*—History has few examples of the kind of devotion and love which Kasturba lavished on her husband. The country and the entire world shares his grief today. It is a tragedy that the end of Kasturba should have come so soon and that, too, when she was in captivity.

### (C) TRIBUTES FROM ABROAD

*'Correspondent' in The Manchester Guardian*—In many ways Mrs Gandhi was a remarkably independent personality. But she was a martyr to her husband's causes, having learned early in her married life the uselessness of resisting beyond the point of his firmly held principles and austere practices. Her many friends while grieving at her death will rejoice at her release.

*British M.P.s' Message*—Labour Members of Parliament Mr William Dobbie and Mr Reginald Sorensen and the Secretary of The India League Mr Krishna Menon sent the following telegram to Mahatma Gandhi: "The India League and friends, British and Indian, send you our profound sympathy in your loss—Many people feel deeply for you."

*Swaraj House, London Feb 27*—At a meeting organized today to condole the death of Mrs Kasturba Gandhi, under the Chairmanship of Dr D N Dutt, the following resolution was passed: "This meeting of Indians conveys a feeling of deepest sorrow and heartfelt condolences to Mahatma Gandhi, Mr Devadas Gandhi, and others at the death in detention of Mrs Kasturba Gandhi. We are convinced that the undying memory of her great sacrifices and disinterested service of the Indian people will serve as a shining example to all those who are struggling for the freedom of our motherland."

The meeting was largely attended by Indian, Chinese, Burmese, Irish and British men and women. A large portrait of Mrs Gandhi garlanded profusely was hung on the wall.

*The Committee of Indian Congressmen in London cabled the following message to Gandhiji.—The Committee of Indian Congressmen deeply mourns the loss of India's noblest lady. Her life of silent dedication will for ever inspire generations of men and women. Her death in detention will bring India's liberation nearer.'*

*Dr Taraknath Das.*—Mrs Gandhi was an outstanding example of the kind of character that can be produced by Indian tradition and morals. Although most unassuming she was a great leader who never compromised with her ideals.

*Dr Sarat Mukerji.*—India must consider this one of her greatest losses particularly deplorable at this time of crisis.

*U.S. Congressman John M. Coffee.*—The passing away of Mrs Gandhi is a blow to the spirit behind the Indian nationalist movement. Although she was self-effacing, she gave tremendous aid and comfort to her husband in his work.

*U.S. Congressman Jerry Voorhis.*—I deeply regret to learn of Mrs Gandhi's death. I share with Gandhi this grievous loss.

*U.S. Congressman Will Rogers (Jr.).*—The news stunned me as it did a great part of the United States. For years we sympathized with the great work Mrs Gandhi and her husband were doing. Her death is Indians' and the world's loss.

*American Press Tributes.*—The *Herald Tribune* praised her as 'a loyal and patient assistant to her husband'. It recalled that she was an important figure in Mr Gandhi's household; it is also pointed out how she doggedly practised her husband's doctrines and became a symbol to millions of Indian women. The steadfastness of Mrs Gandhi's course in following her husband into arrest seven times previously, through many fasts and his long campaign of Indian unification and independence, were also praised by the newspaper.

The *New York Times* pointed out that on the occasions when Mr Gandhi's demonstrations landed him in jail, his wife frequently took the lead of continuing the political agitation despite her frail condition.

*Tributes from Africa—Durban, Feb 24*—At an 'overflow' mass meeting held at the Avalon Theatre under the auspices of the Natal Indian Congress to mourn the death of Mrs Gandhi, President Godfrey recalled that he had the unique experience of working with Mahatma Gandhi. 'In the days of Mahatma's struggle in South Africa' he said 'Mrs Gandhi was ever ready to pull her weight. Her suffering in the epic struggle of 1913 is still fresh in our minds. In common with her great husband and the masses she suffered incarceration.'

The Congress passed the following resolution 'This meeting of the Indian Community records its profound sense of sorrow at the death of Mrs M K Gandhi who throughout Mahatma Gandhi's fight for the amelioration of the lot of humanity in general has not only been a tower of strength to him but has also shared in his innumerable sacrifices for the cause. This meeting extends its heartfelt sympathy to Mahatma Gandhi and to his sons for the irreparable loss the Indian Nation has sustained.'

*Johannesburg, Feb 23*—Memorial services for Mrs Gandhi were held in Durban, Maritzburg and Johannesburg when most Indian business premises were closed during the afternoon. Resolutions of sympathy to Mahatma Gandhi and family were passed. At the Johannesburg meeting which was presided over by Mr I Cachilia of the Nationalist Group of the Transvaal Indian Congress, a memorial fund was inaugurated and 5 000 sterling contributed. The memorial, the form of which will be decided by a committee will be erected in Gandhi's Phoenix Settlement which he gave to the Indian Community, and may take the form of a Girls' College or similar institution.

The meeting passed a resolution saying that her death in the prison of British bureaucracy' was significant of the sacrifices of several Indian martyrs in the struggle for emancipation from British imperialism.

*Zanzibar Feb 24*—At a public meeting held here under the auspices of the Indian National Association a condolence resolution was passed expressing the community's deep sorrow at Smt Kasturba's demise.

which is a great loss to the Indian Nation and womanhood.

*Tribute from Ceylon.*--The President of the Ceylon Indian Congress has telegraphed to Mahatma Gandhi 'Ceylon Indians mourn your sad bereavement. May her soul rest in peace.'